A Song of Love and Crime

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A Song of Love and Crime

by TheSilverQueen

Summary

Will is the son of House Graham, the respected and proud wardens of the north. Or, at least, he was, until King Cordell Dolarhyde decided to execute his family as traitors and Lord Frederick Chilton kidnapped him and tried to sell him to a Dothraki khal to fund an army to take back "his" throne. Too bad Khal Hannibal has no intention of paying for Will when he can just ... take him.

Notes

This is my contribution to the Murder Husbands Big Bang 2017! Thank you to the mods for running this event, all my countless friends who listened to my moan and gripe about this for MONTHS on end, and special thanks to my lovely beta, PKA42 for taking so much time to straighten out my terrible mess.

I was paired with Foxwrapped, who took a lot at my rambling summary and decided to throw their lot in with me, and they made this very lovely set of art pieces that you can see HERE please go give them all the love they deserve!!!

This work draws a lot of inspiration from the "A Song of Ice and Fire" series by George RR Martin. That being said, although the story titles were borrowed and made more fitting for Hannibal, this story will mainly follow events in the first book, A Game of Thrones. Specifically, the story of Daenerys Targaryen and Khal Drogo. The second place of inspiration is Avatar: The Last Airbender, from where I borrowed a lot of the creatures for House sigils.

P.S. I will make a post clarifying which person correlates to which House on the official ASOIAF, but right now I'm too tired from editing. If you have any questions, contact me on tumblr or leave a comment :)

See the end of the work for more notes

A Game of Minds

Chapter Summary

It begins with a war.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

When Mischa asks him, all beseeching maroon eyes and wild curls and too-young eyes, Hannibal does not know how to answer. He does not know how to hold his sister and tell her that their great and mighty dynasty, once spread across the entire world and countless islands, is down to two members. He does not know how to tell her that their older brother broke a solemn engagement to one lady to run off with another, kick-starting a war that swallowed their family whole and burped out severed heads and rivers of blood. He does not know how to tell her that Robertus – the older brother who'd taught Hannibal how to shoot and Mischa how to ride – is dead, that their father is dead, that their mother died before they ever left Dragonstone. He does not know how to tell her that their lives will never be the same again, that they will be hunted wherever they go, that all the songs and promises Hannibal and their mother and their father and Robertus once made to her will never come to fruition.

Then, of course, the pirates come, and Mischa is face down bleeding out on the deck, and even as Hannibal is dragged away he cannot decide if it was better that she died ignorant than if she had died knowing what might have come next.

Hannibal is the last Lecter, the last of the wolpertingers, the last of old Lithuania. But his mother was a du Maurier of Dorne, and her blood staked one last defiant victory upon House Lecter, for Hannibal has only the vivid maroon eyes of the Lecters and little else. So when the pirates sell him, he is merely another boy in the market, just like any other, and he passes from master to master to master.

Until one day, the Dothraki come, with their horses and their braids and their khal, and they laugh at the mute boy who bears a braid but fights only with teeth and fists – but they do not kill him.

So Hannibal looks at them, at their great khalasar, at their fine horses, at their proud braids, and thinks of the dying words of his mother, echoing down the corridor – *Save yourself, kill them all* – and from the ashes of the slave rises a new khal.

Robertus and Francis meet on the battlefield. There is a large ring around them that no one dares enter, for when enemies clash the sight is ugly, but when friends clash, the sight is enough to drive men mad. And these men are already mad, for Robertus has great rents in his

armor and blood down his arm and Francis has spittle and foam at his mouth and his great war hammer in his hand.

“I suppose,” Robertus says to his former friend, “this is when you might demand an apology.”

For what, he does not specify. He does not really need to. It really was just chance, that Robertus ended up betrothed to the woman Francis loved, that Robertus met the woman of his dreams the night his engagement was announced – and that the two women were not one and the same.

Francis snarls. The Dolarhydes were once the staunchest allies of the Lecters, but in one night Robertus destroyed all of it, and sometimes he cannot bring himself to regret it. That, perhaps, is the worst tragedy: that he can read all the letters detailing the fall of Dragonstone, the attack upon the Red Keep, the destruction of their home and their family and yet when his dreams turn to nightmares in his sleep, he sees only Murasaki.

“You owe me no apology,” Francis replies, circling, circling, circling, as though they had not once trained together, as though they had not once saved each others’ lives, as though they had not once sworn to be brothers first and allies second. “*You owe me awe!*”

And Robertus is the wolpertinger, but in that moment, he thinks perhaps that Francis might have been deserving of that title, because when Francis charges, Robertus sees only the fires in his wake, like a dragon sweeping through the air to burn all in its wake. He turns and dodges and slashes, but not all stories bode true, for although Robertus fights for the love of Murasaki, Francis fights for the love of Reba, and only one can emerge victorious.

Perhaps, Robertus thinks, it is not true love that determines the winner. Perhaps it is merely chance, just as it was chance that once delivered Murasaki to his doorstep.

And then Francis puts his blade – the same blade Robertus had once watched him christen with Robertus’s blessing – into Robertus’s heart, and his last thought is not for his brother or his sister or his wife or his children but for Murasaki.

“Lady Murasaki,” Theodore says.

“Lord Graham,” Murasaki says.

Theodore honestly isn’t quite sure what to make of her. She is slim and tall and delicate-looking, like the first green leaf of summer, but her eyes are cold and dim and although Theodore knows his duty, he can’t say whether the burden is eased by her visage.

“Prince Robertus is dead.”

“I know.”

“So is the King.”

“I know.”

“And so is Lady Reba McClane.”

That, at least, gets her attention. When she finally turns her face to him, he cannot help but compare her to Lady Reba. He cannot help but look at her and wonder what Robertus saw in her that would make him break a vow that would start a war. He cannot help but wonder if the rumors are true, if the witch-lady from Asshai really is a witch, if he should have done as his friends advised and run her through with his sword the second he laid eyes upon her.

“And Francis wants my head, then.”

“Not you,” Theodore says. “I suspect he will not remember to want your head for some time. But any child of yours is another story entirely.”

Murasaki laughs, lightly, and it sends shivers up his spine. Theodore has heard this laugh before, in courts, in gardens, in homes. He’s never heard it used to laugh off crass humor, morbid jokes, breaches of etiquette. He’s never heard it when discussing the death of an innocent child.

“There is no child,” Murasaki demurs, as though he cannot see the bed stained with blood behind her as well as he can. “You may rest easy, Lord Graham, that my line and the Lecter line will die with me. It is, perhaps, as you all once said: no witch can bear the heir of a wolpertinger, no matter the gods we might sacrifice to.”

And there is something, *something*, in the gleam of her eyes, but by the time Theodore realizes the truth it is too late.

Murasaki’s head tips back and her eyes grow dim, and he crosses the room just in time to peer into the damp bottom of a freshly drained glass of wine. It smells sweet – too sweet – and only then does he remember that the witches were renowned for their skills at poisons and potions as much as their skills of seduction and glamour.

It is difficult to reconcile, the memory of Murasaki just come to court, beautiful and stunning and charming the ladies and the knights so easily, with the frail empty shell that she is now, but it is Theodore’s duty to search and so he does. There are no servants left to question, as they all have fled; no Kingsguard left to interrogate, as they are all dead; and the stone walls do not breach the secrets that Murasaki and Robertus might have whispered into their depths. Francis orders a search, but they both know it is futile; Murasaki had more than enough time to send any child anywhere, and they have no idea where to begin looking. So Theodore goes home, and when the raven comes he thinks little of it until he sees the look upon his wife’s face.

In neat and calm handwriting, the note the raven brought bears only three words: *Name him Will.*

Theodore does not need to ask who; in the first days of Murasaki’s presentation, his wife had gone to her and asked teasingly what their son would be named, and Murasaki had smiled and said she did not know, that not all magic was aimed at divining the future, and that even those who specialized in it were not necessarily bearers of truth.

“Will Graham,” his wife says, testing the words, and so Will Graham it is when the babe is born.

Chapter End Notes

Next up: A Clash of Antlers, wherein Hannibal and Will finally meet.

A Clash of Antlers

Chapter Summary

> Will faces a rebellion. Hannibal meets Frederick Chilton. And then Hannibal and Will meet each other.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

When he was younger, Will used to think it was a joke or a saying, something that everyone said so often it just became habit and superstition rather than fact.

Now, however, staring at the pale-white face of the messenger who'd come running through the hall, Will realizes that perhaps there was some truth in that old saying: *Grahams who go south never fair well*. And honestly, Will had never imagined anything might happen to his father and his mother and his older brother in King's Landing of all places; his father had just been appointed Hand of the King and his mother, once upon a time, had been close friends with the dowager queen. King Francis had been their oldest ally, even; what could happen under the eye of the king?

Apparently, a great many things.

"You should flee," is the first thing his maester says when Will comes back to himself. "If King Cordell has taken the heads of your father and brother and mother, then he will surely demand yours as well. Grahams who go south never fair well, my lord."

Will looks down at the table. It's a beautiful table, carved by hand from an old weirwood that had fallen in a storm. His father had spent ages and ages and ages shaping it, smoothing and carving and smoothing some more until it had been absolutely perfect, so that – in his words – he could present Will's mother with a gift as extraordinary as the children she had gifted him. Next to the table are tapestries, rich with color and brimming with history, that his mother had whiled away the winters upon. And between the tapestries hang the trophies of countless successful hunts, his brother's gift to their house to display his talent and his dedication to serving their people.

Will could run, of course. Once upon a time, the Grahams were Kings, as opposed to lords, and many Houses here would gladly shelter him.

But this is Wolf Trap. This is his *home*, marked by the inescapable presence of his father and mother and brother, and their father and mother before them, and their father and mother before them. Wolf Trap is the seat of House Graham, and Will was never meant to command it but he will not abandon it now.

“No,” Will says, and then, louder, “No. I am William of House Graham and this is my home. I will not abandon it.”

His father had left his small council behind to advise his brother, who had only left because his father had requested him to come escort their mother home. Perhaps that should have been a warning sign, but whatever his father had said, his brother had still been captured and executed like the rest. Some of the advisors present incline their heads, loyal as always to House Graham; others murmur uneasily like weeds whispering in the wind, and pinned beneath their doubting eyes, Will sees himself – for a moment – as he must appear to them: young and pale and almost swallowed by wolf pelts, barely seven and ten years old. Too old to be a child but too young to be a man, and all the more vulnerable for it.

Then again, his father had always said that age was never the determinant of manhood. He’d put forged steel in Will’s hand at age fourteen and told him to never forget how to fight, because being a lord was about protecting above all else.

“I am William of House Graham,” Will repeats, and this time he stands tall, brings his shoulders back and raises his chin defiantly, because the blood of the kings of the north run in his veins. “I am a ravenstag of Wolf Trap. I will not flee like a coward. This is my home and this is my land and these are my people, and I *will* defend them. I am Lord Graham now.”

Most present have already come to that conclusion, and half of them are bowing before he completes his final sentence. It’s logical, after all; Will only had one brother and that makes him the unquestioned next in line. And even those who are reluctant understand, because even if they want Will to flee they know it will mean that he abandons the North and Wolf Trap to a power vacuum, chaos, and certain bloodshed.

“That might mean war,” Abigail notes, cocking her hip against the wall. When the maester glares at her, she adds, rather grumpily, “Lord Graham.”

Will inclines his head to her, because she has a good point and he needs to acknowledge it because everyone else won’t. Abigail is of House Hobbs, which had tried to rebel against King Francis in the early years and quickly, but rather painfully, been dissuaded of the notion. Abigail is the price for that rebellion, taken and fostered in the farthest and strongest ally in the Seven Kingdoms, but although she’s been treated well, Will knows most days she grows resentful of her status. Mostly, it comes down to neglect, for Abigail Hobbs is a young beta in a world of alphas and omegas. If she’d been an alpha, she would have been trained for war or perhaps sent to Oldtown; if she’d been an omega, she would have been matched to a well-bred alpha and trained in the domestic arts. As a beta, she languishes in between, for the houses with beta lords who seek beta mates are few and far between. She’s worse than a trophy to adorn a court; she’s just a forgotten knick-knack, only remembered when knocked aside searching for another valuable treasure.

“I don’t think King Cordell wants war,” Will replies, because House McClane rules the Vale and while King Francis loved Lady Reba McClane, an actual marriage happened between House Prurnell and House McClane long before that, and Will’s mother was of House Prurnell. They won’t be so quick to move against House Graham. “It would be foolish to ignite a struggle so early into his reign.”

“He is young though.” *Just like you,* Abigail’s eyes say, even if she does not speak.

“Which means that he should be aware that it would behoove him to listen to the counsel of his advisors,” Will says. “And they will not be eager for war either.”

After all, the last war tore the Seven Kingdoms apart. Every House lost someone: House Graham, House Dolarhyde, House Bloom, House Verger, House Hobbs, House McClane, House Prurnell, House Lecter. Some more than others – House McClane lost one, while House Lecter is all but destroyed – but it was a sharp, bloody, painful reminder why war was not the ideal state for the Seven Kingdoms.

Abigail’s face is grim. It’s been like that for the past fortnight and Will isn’t sure why. It unsettles him, actually, because Abigail has been like a sister to him and once upon a time they used to steal food from the kitchens together and gossip. He’s not sure where that chatty, joyful sister went. “He can always get new advisers,” Abigail points out.

And, well, his father always said Will’s weakest point was his tongue.

“So what then, Abigail Hobbs?” Will demands. “Are you asking me to declare a preemptive strike? To break the vow made in good faith by my father to House Dolarhyde? To start a new war that will tear us to shreds?”

“No! I just – I want to talk to you. Please. Alone.”

Will takes a deep breath. *Once upon a time,* he reminds himself, *you were my sister.* “Fine.”

Of course, the second they step outside, Abigail immediately says, “You should flee.”

“Did we not already discuss this?” Will says wearily. He looks at the courtyard, at the children giggling in the shade, at the men sharpening weapons and sparing, at the women chatting cheerfully as they walk. They have no idea, yet, that his father is dead, but word is spreading and winter is coming. He can’t afford to spend time wasting breath on thoughts of war when he has to prepare for winter and brace himself to become the next Lord Graham. “I will not abandon my people, Abigail. Stop asking such a thing of me.”

This time, though, when he moves to walk away, Abigail startles him by grabbing his arm – and not lightly, but hard, hard enough to bruise and for Will to almost stab her on instinct.

He says, “ABIGAIL – ”

And then he stops. Because Abigail no longer looks grim, she looks *resigned*. And not the kind of resigned he’s used to, when she was young and his father made her clean up and wear dresses. She looks like she’s about to watch his funeral right then and there.

Which is when Will realizes that it’s very quiet. Too quiet.

“Abigail,” Will says slowly, hand halfway to the sword at his waist, “what have you done?”

Abigail’s face goes vicious and sharp, and he feels it like a blade to the gut. This is not the face of a person concerned for his welfare; this is the face of a person ready to set fire to a

pyre, and there's a reason that the only time House Graham ever surrendered without a fight was to the House whose favorite weapon was fire.

"For House Hobbs," Abigail whispers, like a eulogy. "*See.*"

And then she kicks him over the balcony.

They take his weapons, they take his cloak, and they cut the Graham ravenstag from where it's embroidered on his chest, laughing all the while as Will snarls at them from where he's chained to the whipping posts. They force him to watch as they mercilessly slaughter his advisors one by one, with arrows and fire and blades. They pull down the Graham banners and drag them through the dirt, careless and mocking, even as they ransack the pantries and storages.

Abigail, meanwhile, stands at her father's side, face pale but determined.

In a twisted way, it makes sense. Wolf Trap has never fallen in its entire history, partially because it's so far north that there's a very narrow window of time where nature will not severely punish any force coming to conquer and partially because House Graham has always had an excellent reputation and lots of banner men upon which to call for aid. So of course it could only ever be captured with the help of an insider, and one who played in the caverns and catacombs all of her life. Abigail knows almost every secret of Wolf Trap and she's played them to devastating effect, given the soldiers that now lie dead on the ground.

When the last of his small council finally perishes, voice gone hoarse with terrible screams due to the flames licking his flesh, Garret Hobbs finally deigns to saunter over to Will, a lazy sneer on his face.

"Oh, don't look so angry, dearest William," he coos. "It's not your fault, not really. We've been working on this plan for ever so long. And don't worry! We've even conjured up a perfect place for you in the new world. We might have to . . . do a bit of redecorating, of course, and obviously the name must go – honestly, Wolf Trap, who thought of such a name – but you, my dear, you are going to be celebrated and honored."

"Yes, I'm sure my head will make a fine trophy for your war room, Hobbs," Will spits, because he's never learned when to shut up.

Garret blinks, and then he laughs. And Will stills, because he's heard that laugh before, and never from men who had good intentions in their mind. In fact, the last man who laughed like that, Will's father executed as a deserter and murderer.

"Your head? No. Your children, on the other hand . . ."

Will leans his weight back, because straining against the chains are really starting to hurt his shoulders, which are already bruised by the two flight of stairs he had fallen down when Abigail kicked him over the balcony, and smirks through a mouthful of blood. The Hobbs soldiers weren't exactly gentle when they took Will down, omega or no, and Will got his due before he was finally subdued and dragged away kicking and biting and screaming. "You'll

get no children from me, Garret Jacob Hobbs," Will says softly. "I don't think even you could order Abigail to do that."

Abigail nearly retches.

Her father just cocks his head. "Whoever said they would be Abigail's children?" he muses mildly.

And then, whilst Will is busy processing that latest horror, he clicks his fingers at the nearest soldiers. "Take him back to my new quarters," Garret instructs. "Do play nice this time, it will be rather difficult for my new consort to bear children if he's bleeding internally. Feel free to take off the clothes though; those will not be needed."

Will is naked, fuming, and bloody when the servant's door creaks open and a man comes through, and the only reason Will doesn't immediately lay him out on the floor and steal his weapons and clothes is that it's Frederick bloody Chilton stepping through and the last time Will had seen him, Frederick had been a sobbing mess on the ground after Will's brother knocked him clean off his horse at the tourney.

"Lord Graham," Chilton says. He's probably aiming for suave, but the fact that his sword is belted on backwards rather ruins the image.

Will just crosses his arms. "What are you doing here, Chilton? I thought your molding ruin of a House was based in the Stormlands. Unless you've taken up with House Hobbs, in which case, please remove yourself from my quarters before I gladly rip your throat out with my teeth."

Chilton visibly pales. Good.

"Gods, why are you Grahams so *violent*," Chilton wails. "Here I come, just a generous man offering to help out of the kindness of my heart – "

"Either help me get out of Wolf Trap," Will interrupts, "or I'll help you stop living."

Thankfully, Chilton is not entirely devoid of wits. He swallows once, looking displeased about being interrupted, and then he sighs and throws Will a bag that turns out to be filled with clothes. "Then I suppose we might as well go," Chilton sighs dramatically, even as he not at all subtly eyes Will's behind as Will scrambles into the clothes as fast he can, wrinkling his nose at the terrible smell. "And before you ask, no, I am not giving you a weapon. Gods know you'd just stab me and run."

Will gives him a ravenstag smile, sharp and horned and utterly fearless. "Well," he says, sauntering casually past Chilton into the servant's entrance, "at least you understand where I stand."

The bravery lasts Will approximately ten minutes.

It's a fruitful ten minutes, to be sure; Will and Chilton steal out of Wolf Trap's main keep, quietly saddle two horses, and are out of the doors before the guards even stop yawning. Will even manages to steal a guard's cloak and rucksack, even if the immediate urge to flee far away overcomes his urge to paw through the rucksack and begin re-arming himself. Will's not stupid; House Chilton has long chafed at its status as a minor house beholden to House Dolarhyde, and he is not about to take back the north from House Hobbs with Frederick Chilton clinging to his horse's withers.

Then, of course, Will's luck runs out, and he rides straight into an entire camp of soldiers, most of whom have arrows nocked straight at his face.

"Oh, for the sake of all the gods," Will says.

Chilton shrugs. "Tell me you weren't planning to run, and I'll tell them to stop aiming at you. They won't hurt your face, to be sure, but you certainly won't need your legs where you're going."

"And where, pray tell, is that?"

"To the Great Grass Sea," Chilton says proudly, even as two soldiers pull Will none too gently from his horse and bind his hands behind his back. "The home of the Dothraki khals. You, my dear Will, are going to get me an army, and once I have an army, well. The Iron Throne won't be too far behind. If you're still alive by then, I might even deign to make you my concubine."

They put Will in a cage, like an animal being transported for a fair, and the comparison is so accurate that Will spends most of the voyage across the sea attempting to not be sick. Chilton's men don't exactly strike him as the nurturing type, after all; they haven't even bothered to offer him new clothes or water to wash his face. Once in a while, they throw bits of bread at him, so really, by the time they reach Pentos, Will imagines that he feels and looks almost exactly like a bear loosed for sport during a hunt.

Chilton takes one look at him and groans. "Good god, I told you to make sure he was kept in reasonably good condition," he complains. "What kind of sale can I make with a ravenstag that has half its feathers molted off?"

Will is therefore treated to an immensely humiliating experience, wherein he is dunked in freezing cold water, scrubbed within an inch of his life, dunked in hot water, dunked back into the cold water, and then tied down so that the tittering crowd of handmaidens can line his eyes, paint his lips, and tousle his curls. By the time they're finally done, Will's wearing the flimsiest piece of clothing he's ever worn, so thin it's almost transparent, and more like a length of cloth with its ends hastily sewed together than anything that might be considered a proper dress. They refuse him shoes, possibly in an attempt to stop him running away, and Will makes it halfway down the outside of the building before the guards catch on and tie him up again.

At least they're smarter this time, because they blindfold him and tie him to the wall.

Still, Will nearly bites Chilton's fingers off when the man comes too close.

"Gods above, I am going to be so pleased when my audience with the khals is over," Chilton sighs. "You are almost impossible to cage. I'll have to order some custom bindings for you when I establish my harem. I hear that Grahams do well in the darkness; perhaps I should ensure you never see the light of day again."

"You take my eyes," Will snarls, "and I'll take your tongue."

Chilton's rapid backpedaling makes Will smile. He clearly hadn't expected Will to so unerringly figure out where he was standing based on his obnoxious and unending chattering, but it's almost child's play now for Will. He used to spend hours and hours playing tag with his brother in the catacombs. Locating one very loud man who is not trying to hide is almost laughably easy, after all of that.

"My Lord Chilton – "

"*King* Chilton!"

"Er, yes, King Chilton. It's time."

"Excellent. Just stay here, dear Will. Do try not to fall asleep out of – ouch! Good gods above, don't just stand there, get this stag a gag!"

To say that Hannibal is unimpressed by the speech that the self-styled King Frederick Chilton of the Seven Kingdoms is making would be a vast, vast, vast understatement. The man clearly has no idea how to run a war campaign, never mind how to court allies. And from the way he's taken care to trim his hair, he clearly does not understand Dothraki customs either.

Still, Hannibal listens. It might make for some good storytelling, and he can tell his bloodriders are particularly amused.

The khals as a whole, though, are unmoved. Dothraki do not cross the sea; they do not trust water that their mounts cannot drink, and Chilton has given them little indication as to any reason good enough to attempt to cross it. Hannibal's memories of Westeros are faint, very faint, and his urge to return home died with Mischa. And for the most part, as the biggest khalasars go, the rest of the Dothraki go, and Hannibal has one of the biggest khalasars that roam the Great Grass Sea.

Towards the end, Chilton really begins to crack. "So you see," he finishes, "I really do need just a little bit of help, that is all. Once I am King, I can reward you will all the gold that you desire. And horses! Plenty of horses."

Khal Eldon grunts once the translators are done whispering Chilton's words into the ears of the khals. He's not a new khal, but his braid is only to his shoulders; his khalasar is constantly jockeying for position and he has little patience for posturing. "There is plenty of gold here," he says. "And horses too. Why should we cross the poisoned waters for things we can find here in abundance?"

Chilton mops at his brow, almost compulsively, and Hannibal barely holds back a sigh. The khals won't kill him, mostly because it would be a waste of energy, but Chilton seems not to realize that. He seems rather desperate for any army, or at the very least an assassination attempt to prove that he is worth something.

"Three seconds," Tobias murmurs.

"Two," Abel disagrees.

"One," Hannibal says, interrupting his bloodriders, because as enjoyable as it is to see them imagining the quickest ways to kill Chilton, he's got a much easier one. He straightens up, allowing his braid to swing down over his shoulder, and watches as Chilton turns desperate eyes to him. "Give us a reason to consider you, Frederick Chilton, or leave. You have wasted enough time already."

As soon as the translator is done speaking, Chilton swallows very visibly. "I will, uh, be right, er, back!"

"Can we leave now," Abel says.

Hannibal eyes the other khals. A lot of them are consulting with their bloodriders and, most likely, coming to the same conclusions as Hannibal: what Chilton is offering is not worth the risk. Yet to walk away now might indicate weakness to the other khals, an unwillingness to commit not because Chilton is full of empty promises but because they have not the strength, and although Hannibal relishes a fight, he is less eager to have it in the manse that Pentos just gifted to him to appease Hannibal's khalasar when they arrived.

Not because he cares about cleaning up the bloodshed, but because it would be a pain to cut all of the braids of the khals who have come.

And then Chilton comes sauntering back through the doors, and all thoughts of leaving are driven straight out of Hannibal's head, because he is dragging behind him on a leash a stumbling figure, blindfolded and shoeless, and that *scent* is indescribable, like warm fur and cold water and freshly picked lemons. By the time that Chilton affixes the chain to one of the braziers and whips off the blindfold like he is an actor on stage, Hannibal has already memorized the scent – just in time to be shocked anew by the sheer *beauty* in the face that Chilton unveils, so full of rage that the council of khals goes quiet immediately. The boy's eyes are burning and his teeth are bared almost on instinct, and it's such a contrast to the flimsy, soft clothes he is wearing and the fluffy curls tumbling about his face that Hannibal almost wonders if perhaps someone has bathed the boy in too much perfume.

But no – layered beneath the lemons and water is the distinctive scent of *omega*, and beneath that, true rage and hatred, so acrid it makes Hannibal's eyes water.

Chilton beams at whatever he sees in the eyes of the khals, and then he says, "A gift, as proof of my intentions and my word to reward whomsoever helps me. An omega, William of House Graham."

The “gift” is unusual, to be sure. Omegas are not rare, precisely, but they are fiercely guarded by the Houses they are born into or the brothels they land in. Hannibal has not seen an omega since the last time he threatened a Free City and they thought to fight instead of surrender, which ended quickly when the khalasar savaged their way through the city, and with his reputation, that was truly a long time ago.

Which is when the boy spits at their feet, and Hannibal is standing before he knows it.

It’s difficult, to speak in his mother tongue again, but there are some words Hannibal has heard many times even in the Dothraki Sea, so he musters his tongue and manages to say, “Mine.”

Chilton claps in excitement. “Excellent! I promise you will have an excellent night.”

“An excellent life, yes,” Hannibal agrees, and watches the excitement fade as the translator repeats Hannibal’s words.

“I – I don’t – ”

“Mine,” Hannibal repeats. “I will have him.”

“Well, yes, certainly, for – ”

“For forever,” Hannibal interrupts, as the translator pales and slowly stutters out the words. “Until the sun rises in the west and sets in the east. He will be mine.”

The fury climbs to an incandescent rage in the boy’s eyes when he hears that. But it’s too late; Hannibal’s bloodriders have already grasped his arms firmly, and Abel has already cut the ropes binding him with a contemptuous flick of his dagger. Chilton stammers, but Hannibal ignores him, watching the way the boy looks like he wants to seize Chilton’s sword and cut them to ribbons himself.

Instead, Hannibal remembers the banners that marched upon Dragonstone – and the ravenstag that led them.

Chapter End Notes

Next up: A Storm of Ravens, wherein there is a marriage.

Someone made art of the moment when Hannibal and Will meet!!! All of my love to Hachiseiko for their beautiful art, which you can see HERE.

A Storm of Ravens

Chapter Summary

> The khalasar holds a wedding. Will finds his footing in the khalasar. Hannibal reveals a secret.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will doesn't need to see Chilton's gaping face to know that things have taken an unexpected turn. He doesn't even need to wait for the translator. It's enough to look up to seeing a very tall Dothraki khal with gold slung around his waist and a thick long braid dangling over his chest tilting his chin at him with the tiniest smile and the word "Mine" falling off of his lips. And Will's always known that his position as the spare and an omega would likely result in a marriage of convenience, a trade to strengthen ties or forge new ones, but he never expected that he would end up beholden to not a random Lord of Westeros but instead a half-naked, long-haired khal who looks like he could break Will in half.

It makes Will long for his sword. Or his dagger, he really wouldn't mind any weapon, to be honest, as the Dothraki men start to drag him away.

On the bright side, they're far gentler than Chilton's men. On the downside, they very clearly treat him as important in a way Chilton's men never bothered, so Will looks longingly at the window and knows he won't get a chance to flee out of it whilst in the hands of the Dothraki.

Will is dragged through hallway after hallway after hallway, until finally even he can't remember the pattern of the way back and then suddenly the Dothraki are emerging through a series of doors to the outside, where there is a large encampment filled with the sounds of what Will presumes to be a khalasar. There are horses, women, men, children, and dogs running all over the place, joking, laughing, wrestling, eating, drinking, riding, sewing. It's an entire lifestyle happening right in front of him, and Will misses Wolf Trap so fiercely that his heart aches.

From the way the shoulders of khal and his men relax as they stride into camp, it's clear that this is their home.

As they continue pulling Will along, many of the people stop and stare. Some are dismissive, some are curious, and some are openly derisive, even if they avert their eyes out of politeness for the khal who marches forward without hesitation. With so many people looking at him, Will wants to curl into a little ball and surround himself with swords and armor, except even as he cringes away his guards grunt and simply grip his arms tighter.

Finally, though, they come to a stop in front of a single large tent. Well, it's not really large – Will's seen larger at tourneys – but compared to most of the tents around them, it's certainly an improvement where size is concerned. It's sturdy, ropes and stakes carefully lashed to keep it upright and anchored to the ground, but as the flaps twitch in the wind, Will glimpses rich rugs and a brazier inside, so clearly despite the nomadic lifestyle, the Dothraki khals are not spoiled for some luxury.

The khal vanishes inside, and the guards give Will a hearty shove. Will digs his feet in, though. He has no intention of going into a strange tent with a strange alpha in a strange land.

One guard snorts. "You, go," he commands, the words strange and accented in his voice, pushing Will again as though he is a recalcitrant foal.

If Will were surrounded by people who spoke his language, he might take the opportunity for pointed critique of the man's attitude. Or he might simply go for polite but firm refusal. But this is Essos, not Westeros, and right now Will is not Will, Lord of House Graham, but Will, omega gift of Chilton, so Will just shrugs, sliding his wrists just so to ensure the rope slips neatly off his hands, and then takes off like a shot towards the nearest horse. Many of them are milling around near their owners, not tied down the way horses were back in Westeros, so Will is halfway onto mounting a horse when the shouts start.

Here we go, Will thinks, and then he apologizes silently to the poor animal beneath him and kicks it savagely in the side. The horse takes off with a high pitched screech, bolting so fast Will nearly loses his seat, and then there are more screams as people dive out of the way of his snorting mount.

Unfortunately, the encampment is rather large and Will really does not want to mow down some poor child, so Will loses precious time yanking on his horse's mane to attempt to guide it to avoid trampling people who can't run away fast enough. It's for this reason and this reason alone that his head start is not enough, because he's just on the edge of camp when, out of the corner of his eye, he sees a great braid flying in the wind, and he looks over just in time to see the khal smoothly stand up from his seat, spread his arms wide, and tackle Will straight off his mount.

Even more infuriatingly, the khal actually rolls, cushioning Will as though he's a precious little bundle, and Will ends up coughing and winded on top of the khal's hard chest.

Afterwards, the khal gives him no chances at all: he simply stands up, hoists Will over his shoulder as though he's some princess being carted off of a ship, and strolls back through camp as though he hasn't a care in the world, ignoring the way Will beats at his back and kicks at his waist and yanks on his long braid.

This time, when the people stare, they begin to laugh.

The khal even stoops, just slightly, to avoid hitting Will's head on the entrance as he ducks into the tent, and by that point Will is so infuriated that he thinks it should really be no surprise that the first thing he does when the khal dumps him unceremoniously on the bed is to try and stab the khal with the knife he stole off the khal's belt.

Sadly, he doesn't manage to cut the khal, who leaps backwards as though he's much smaller than Will instead of much larger. The khal even *laughs* at him for it.

Will bares his teeth, because he is a ravenstag of Wolf Trap, and omega or not he's going to go down fighting. Then he dives off the bed, aiming for the khal's legs, because the first rule of being the smaller opponent is to hamstring them and bring them down to your level. Will does manage to cut the khal there, but then the khal scruffs his neck like an unruly kitten and drags him up with one arm so Will, naturally, kicks him in the shins and aims the knife at the man's neck, only just missing him. Perhaps it's the close call or perhaps the khal simply gets bored, but either way, one moment Will is dangling in his grip and the next he's been thrown against the bed, the knife clattering out of his hand, and then he's gasping and clawing at his throat as the khal wraps his braid around his neck and efficiently tighten the noose.

"No," the khal says sternly.

Will bites down – it's the one maneuver he never failed to employ when things got desperate in training – but this is the khal's hair, not his arm or hands, and so the khal merely grunts in amusement and holds the braid steady, until Will is so faint from lack of air that black colors the edges of his vision.

And then, just as suddenly as the khal had looped his braid around his neck, the khal lets go and Will crumples against the ground wheezing and panting.

The khal nonchalantly swings his braid back of his shoulder, as though he hadn't just turned it into a weapon to strangle the life out of Will moments ago, and then carefully picks up the knife and slips it back into place on his belt. When he realizes Will is glaring at him, he pats at the knife again and repeats, "No."

Then the man just turns around and saunters away.

Will, not for the first time, reflects that alphas are the most certainly the absolute *worst*.

The marriage ceremony, if it can even called that, is a rather long drown out process where Will sits by the khal and watches as people dance, eat, and rut with each other as representatives come up to give tributes and gifts to the khal. On the bright side, the constant repeating of the standard phrases cues Will in that the khal's name is Hannibal, but as Hannibal hardly looks at Will, he can't get any sense of his new alpha's mindset.

Normally, eye contact would be helpful but not necessary for Will to discern someone's emotions and motivations, but Hannibal is different. His face hardly ever moves, he almost never blinks, and he gives off the impression of a rather immovable wall: blank, cold, and utterly stoic.

It's intensely irritating.

Also it's intensely hot. Will is sweating just in the flimsy little dress he was given, and he has no idea how Hannibal remains so immovable despite the heat.

Finally, though, after about five duels, an endless caravan of gifts that include gold, jewels, rich silks, ten horses, a cache of swords, a duo of handmaidens that bow to Will, two petrified wolfdragon eggs, more gold, more jewels, and many more things, a Dothraki rider approaches with a torch and it seems to signal something, because the khal abruptly stands and immediately the drums and whistles and shouts taper off. Hannibal says something in his language, Will can't figure out what, but then he is reaching over to grab Will's arm and pull him down the dais so Will just sighs and tries not to trip over his feet.

Which is when Hannibal takes the reins of the most beautiful horse Will has ever seen, with a coat that gleams golden in the dying sun and a proud arching neck and a mane and tail as white as snow, and turns around and places them firmly in Will's hand.

"What?" Will says, and he doesn't speak the language but his face must speak clearly enough, because the translator immediately comes to Will's side at Hannibal's sharp gesture.

"It's for you, khaleesi," the man murmurs. "A gift, from Khal Hannibal to his khaleesi. A golden horse for his golden omega."

Will has had his own horse before. He was the son of a major lord and he learned how to ride and joust like all the rest. And it's not like he hasn't had sweet, complimentary words dripped into his ear before to earn his favor, but this is different. Hannibal scans his face, nods briefly in satisfaction, and then immediately moves to the side to get on top of his own horse. Will still can't read him, but it's clear this gift was not to win favors or promote flattery but just that: a gift. And perhaps it says something sad about Will's former life, but no one has ever just given him a gift before.

Will reaches out with trembling fingers and strokes the horse's long neck. It whickers gently, butting Will's shoulder, and he can't help how he laughs. "Thank you," he says, looking up at the khal.

The translator hesitates. "Ah, there is no such word. For that."

And just like that, Will is brought sharply out of his daydream. It's a horse, gift or no, from the man who carried him off from Chilton's grip like a pirate and who probably intends to pin Will to his bed and just take him like he's taken countless other women whose homes he has destroyed. So Will swallows back his questions and just gets on the damn horse, because at this point he's too resigned to fight back here and be carried off again.

Will's horse, at least, seems well trained; he follows Hannibal's with a smooth gait and unhesitating pace. And the land around them truly is a sight to behold, with tall fragrant grass and a setting sun to cast golds and reds and oranges onto the ground around them. If he hadn't just been effectively sold to a Dothraki khal, he might even call it a beautiful – but quite honestly, Will finds his gaze returning time and time again to the striking figure of his alpha in the distance and when his alpha finally comes to a halt, Will almost gives into the urge to try and run again.

Almost.

And then his khal is grabbing his waist and lifting him, albeit very, very gently, off of his horse, and the opportunity is lost.

Will crosses his arms over his chest and tries very hard not to look at the incredibly deadly assortment of weapons strapped to Hannibal's belt. From the way the khal's eyes gleam, he's not successful in the endeavor at all.

Then Hannibal does something truly strange: he crosses his arms too, as though mimicking Will's posture, and says, "No?"

The word still comes out rough and accented, but it is very clearly a question, as opposed to the stern telling-off it was last time. When Will just looks at him, puzzled and unable to figure out why, the khal rolls his shoulders and then reaches out to deliberately lower one of Will's sleeves, smirking when Will immediately smacks at his hand and yanks it back up.

"No?" he repeats, and this time Will feels his face go red as he gets the implication.

"Absolutely a no," Will says firmly.

For a long moment, Will thinks that it's no good. For all his training, he could only ever slow Hannibal, not defeat him, unless he got his hands on a good weapon or managed an incredibly lucky first blow, and he closes his eyes and braces himself to become acquainted with what it's like to lie with an alpha.

Except then Hannibal says, "No," much more gently and much closer to Will, and when Will jerks back reflexively, Hannibal grips him around the waist again and just tucks his face against Will's neck.

His beard is incredibly scratchy, but his teeth against Will's neck are very, very sharp, so Will just goes still and stares into the darkening sky.

Hannibal inhales once. Twice. Three times.

Then Hannibal abruptly lifts him back on his horse with yet another "No" and a calm nod, and Will stares in confusion as Hannibal mounts his horse, clicks to Will's, and starts circling back to camp.

"Oh my gods, did you bring me all the way out here just to *smell me*?" Will demands.

"No," Hannibal says, sounding incredibly smug.

"I hate you."

Hannibal does not come to bed that night, so Will eventually gets tired of waiting for Hannibal to come and rip his clothes off. He doesn't mean to fall asleep, but it's been a long day, so one moment he's blinking dazedly at his blankets and the next he's dead to the world.

When he wakes up, there is a heavy arm weighing down his waist and a scratchy beard buried in his curls, so Will wriggles around and glares at his alpha until Hannibal finally

concedes to open one lazy eye.

“I still hate you,” Will tells him.

“No,” Hannibal says.

Will shoves him off the bed and feels a strange flush of pleasure when Hannibal just laughs.

It would be incorrect to say that Will settles in to Dothraki life. He doesn’t settle into it so much as it just sort of . . . comes to him. It’s a simple life: most mornings, they wake up, break camp, ride, eat, ride, ride some more, choose a new camp, eat, and go to sleep. Will is trailed by a bloodrider and his handmaidens, who introduce themselves as Elise and Marissa, but otherwise most of the Dothraki get used to the sight of him and just ignore him, particularly when Elise digs up proper Dothraki clothing and Will finally is able to shed his flimsy silk clothes. Hannibal sometimes sleeps next to him and sometimes comes to bed long after Will has dozed off, but after the first few nights of Will saying a firm “no” when Hannibal asks, he mostly gives up and just collapses into bed, gives Will a few good sniffs, and then goes to sleep.

Will’s behind is sore as though someone had taken a whip to it due to sudden great amount of horseback riding, though, so he greatly appreciates both Hannibal’s hands off and his presence at night, because even if Will doesn’t really consider Hannibal his alpha, his body certainly does now after a fortnight sleeping in the same bed, and the reassuring presence of *alpha* really does wonders for Will.

Meanwhile, as Hannibal drinks around the fire and does whatever he does during the day on his horse, Will spends his time waiting for his hands and body to get used to the constant riding and slowly coaxing bits of the Dothraki language out of Elise and Marissa.

“Kha-lee-si,” Elise says.

“Kha-leh-see?”

“No, slower. Kha. Lee. Si.”

“Khaleesi,” Will says, groaning, because she’s spent five minutes on this word alone and Will’s getting a tad annoyed.

There’s a rumbling from behind him, and Elise and Marissa sit bolt upright. Will, who is currently sitting in just a shirt as Marissa mends his pants, nearly falls off the bed and instead swallows quite heavily as Hannibal stalks in, eyes dark and heated. Will just barely resists pulling away when Hannibal gets close, but Elise has been nagging him to speak up in Dothraki to Hannibal to gain his respect, so he just stares at Hannibal and hopes the message in his eyes will be enough.

Hannibal, strangely enough, just strokes his cheek very gently and then leaves.

Will looks at Elise.

“He said, uh, well done, my khaleesi,” she translates.

“Oh, I’m his now, am I,” Will grumbles, squirming under the blankets. He isn’t cold, but Hannibal still hasn’t managed to see Will naked and he’d like to keep that up. Hannibal, of course, has no such shame, parading around the tent naked as the day he was born whenever Will doesn’t close his eyes fast enough. Not that Will is always trying his hardest, because a life of riding and fighting has left Hannibal a very fine specimen of alpha, but still.

“He is your khal. You are his khaleesi.”

“That still means absolutely nothing to me.”

Elise and Marissa have a fierce discussion in whatever language they speak. It’s not Dothraki – as far as Will can tell, both of them were pleasure slaves at one point – but they have a better grasp of the customs and language than Will does. “If the khal is the king,” Elise says finally, “then the khaleesi is his . . . queen? I think that is the word?”

And yes, in the older days, way back when, sometimes omegas were called queens just like women were, but that tradition fell by the wayside. Even in the incredibly unlikely scenario that Will had married a king, he would be the consort, not the queen. The only House, as far as Will is aware, that still holds the traditions of king alpha and queen omega is House Lecter – except, of course, that House Lecter no longer exists.

But, hey, it means Will is the queen. He’ll take that.

He appreciates it even more when Hannibal comes in, sweaty and dusty, and tries to just slide his clothes off and get into their bed. Normally, Will doesn’t really care because it’s not like he’s responsible for washing the bed sheets and he’s usually just as dusty and sweaty and tired, but today they only rode for half a day before the khal and many of the riders went off for a hunt, so Will is actually not that tired. Plus he’s finally starting to develop the calluses and endurance to ride so he’s not sore either. So this time, Will very firmly shoves him off and crosses his arms.

Hannibal gives him a weird look, but almost . . . politely. One eyebrow goes up, for example, but he doesn’t seem angry.

“No,” Will tells him, and he can’t stop the smugness from creeping in.

Hannibal tilts his head. He tugs at the blanket again, but Will just grips it tighter.

“*No,*” Will repeats, and this time he pokes Hannibal right in the side, and battle-hardened khal or not, Hannibal winces and moves backwards. Will points at the bath, points at Hannibal, and then rolls over and shows Hannibal his back, the same way Hannibal once did for him.

“No,” Hannibal says, sounding amused.

This time, when Hannibal climbs in, Will bites him, and the dust in his mouth is worth it.

Hannibal gets in the damn bath.

Will sort of dozes through the bath. Hannibal is as unashamed of his nudity as ever, and Will is tired so mostly he just catches flashes of Hannibal scrubbing away the dust, dunking his long hair, and flexing and stretching as he dries off. He doesn't really wake up until Hannibal finishes and comes back to the bed.

"No?" Hannibal asks.

Will yawns. He'll take a slightly damp alpha over a stinky, dusty one. "Yes," he says.

There's a long pause, but Will knows Hannibal is many things and stupid is not one of them. When Will takes no further action, Hannibal puts two and two together and just slides in again. He doesn't even seem angry; he folds Will into his embrace as he always does, settling them together so that Will can feel every inch of his hard body against Will's, and does his ritual sniffing before drifting off as he usually does.

Will's not really sure how long it's been since their marriage. Chilton could probably tell him; the man's been going mad with Hannibal's slow pace to war. But all the same, Will thinks that if he went home right now, dressed in sturdy but dusty Dothraki clothes, his curls untamed and falling all over, tanned from hours under the sun, the lords of the north would sooner stare at him than bow to him.

When he mentions it to Marissa, she just smiles. "But you're not a lord anyone," she tells him. "You're a khaleesi."

Right now, sleeping in a Dothraki tent in a Dothraki camp with a Dothraki khal draped all over him, Will can't exactly disagree. But maybe it's not really worth disagreeing over. Will is warm, safe, protected and coddled and fed. And Hannibal, for all his fierceness and blank faces, treats Will with respect, and really, that's all Will could ask for.

Okay, Will thinks. *I guess I'll be a khaleesi.*

The next day, after Hannibal has departed for another hunt with his bloodriders, Will finally musters up the courage to ask about the feral dogs that roam the edges of the khalasar.

"Oh, they're not dogs, khaleesi," Elise says. "They're wolves. They are attracted due to the scraps."

"And the stragglers," Marissa adds.

It makes sense. The Dothraki respect strength; Will has learned that much. Those who cannot ride cannot lead, and those who cannot walk are left behind. It's brutal and unforgiving, but Will's seen worse in court. And in court, people are tortured and backstabbed and executed. Here, out on the plains, it's a simple understanding that people dying is part of the circle of life.

Still, Will has always liked wolves.

"Tell the khalasar to stop."

Elise blinks. Will has given orders, to be sure, but never to the khalasar. The bloodriders or Hannibal have stopped the khalasar to hunt or pillage or even just to rut into willing partners, but Will has just sort of . . . gone with the flow.

“You want the entire khalasar to stop? For how long?”

“Until I command them otherwise.”

A faint smile touches her lips. “As you wish, khaleesi.”

A bloodrider follows Will, but he ignores it. In the beginning he was slightly exasperated and annoyed, but then again, there is the Kingsguard and the Queensguard. If Will is the khaleesi, then it makes sense that one of Hannibal’s men will always guard him. Not because Will is defenseless or useless, but because he is the khaleesi and it is his right. If Will could communicate with him it would be perfect, but the bloodriders seem content to not interfere so they mutually just ignore each other.

The wolves are tearing into the remains of what looks like a chicken carcass. It’s a sorry sight, since there is hardly much meat left on the thing, so when they growl at Will for approaching he is not insulted.

“Come now,” Will says, crouching down and waving a bit of jerky at them. “I won’t hurt you.”

Most of the wolves eye him suspiciously. But Will is patient; he just sits there, ignoring the way his legs go numb, and holds out the jerky and eventually, slowly, inch by inch, one of the wolves starts forward. It’s incredibly skittish, so Will puts the jerky down and watches it swallow it whole and lick its chops.

“Good boy,” Will murmurs after a quick glance along its belly.

Some of the wolves drift off at that point, tearing through other bits of garbage scattered around, but the grey wolf with the fluffy tail stays close. He sits panting at Will’s side and doesn’t seem to mind when Will runs his hands over his side as long as Will lays out another strip of jerky.

He does, however, nearly bolt when someone suddenly speaks from behind them.

“A predator always knows a fellow predator.”

To say that Hannibal is confused when they return from the hunt and the khalasar has barely covered half the ground it should have is an understatement. Hannibal built his khalasar with blood and blood and more blood; to say that most of his riders are loyal would be like saying the Dothraki like horses.

Even worse, neither Abel nor Will is anywhere to be found.

“He ordered the khalasar to stop,” Elise tells him, quivering under his glare. “And then he just . . . walked off. That way.”

Hannibal just sighs. He thought Will had stopped trying to run away, but then again, Will always has been full of surprises. He still has the livid bruise from where his temperamental omega sank his teeth into Hannibal's shoulder to express his extreme displeasure. Will can't speak Dothraki, but he most certainly can communicate when it suits him.

That being said, Abel is calmly sitting on his horse only a little while away, looking rather amused, so Hannibal's concern goes down significantly.

"Your little wolf is finding new playmates," Abel tells him.

Wolves are not uncommon with khalasars. They are a much more reliable source of food to the packs, after all, and far easier to come by. Abel and Tobias have taken to calling Will his little wolf, mostly because they laughed themselves sick when they learned that Hannibal's bruise came from Will's teeth.

Still, Abel's words mean nothing to Hannibal – until he rides on a little further and finds Will sitting in a circle of panting wolves, petting them and murmuring gently. It's a beautiful sight, his lovely mate with bright eyes and wide smile and a pack of wolves circling and sniffing and – while not tamed, exactly – calm and listening to whatever Will is saying. The wolves are so calm, in fact, that ravens have flown down to pick at the carcasses around them, and they do not seem bothered by the wolves nearby.

They scatter when Hannibal walks through them, of course, so when Hannibal says, "A predator always knows a fellow predator" and Will looks up, he sees Hannibal seemingly surrounded by wings as the ravens take flight.

Will blinks at him, and then the words register and he goes straight from surprise to full on wolf-anger. "*You speak Westerosi*?!"

Hannibal shrugs. It's not like he's the only one with hidden talents. "A little. It has been . . . difficult to return. I have not spoken it in many, many years. You have a very lovely singing voice."

The sight of red on Will's face is very pleasing. The way the wolves snap their jaws around him is not so much.

"That was – that was private!"

"We are Dothraki. Nothing is private," Hannibal replies.

"Well, some things should be."

"Such as commanding the khalasar to stop until you deigned to rejoin them so you could play with your wolves?"

Will lifts his chin, as though daring Hannibal to challenge him. Dressed in rags and flimsy silk trappings, he was beautiful. Now, in proper clothing and eyes burning and feral wolves roaming at his feet, he is *radiant*. "It is our khalasar, and I will command them as I see fit. And if I want to play with wolves, then I will play with wolves."

When Hannibal steps closer, the wolves slink away, probably because he smells like alpha and blood, but Will does not, delightful little thing. He does not even flinch.

Will smells divine. Like sunshine and grass and wolf. Hannibal wants to bury his nose in his shoulder and never let him go.

“Yes,” Hannibal says, slipping back into Dothraki, “I suppose you will, my khaleesi.”

Chapter End Notes

Next up: A Feast for Pigs, wherein the khalasar visits Vaes Dothrak.

A Feast for Pigs

Chapter Summary

> Will goes into heat. Hannibal reveals a second secret. Will and Hannibal face the dosh khaleen.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

To say that Will is not expecting Elise to attack his hair with a comb is an understatement. In fact, he yelps so loudly that Tobias nearly shreds the tent as he leaps inside, ready for battle. He leaves fairly quickly once he realizes what's really happening, but his shoulders are shaking, and the way he says, "Ah, little wolf," leaves Will certain that Hannibal will hear of it by nightfall.

"My hair is fine," Will complains.

Elise ruthlessly makes another pass with the comb. "You must look your best," she insists.

"For what?"

Elise pokes him in the chest, and Will nearly falls off the chair. It's not that the poke really had much force behind it, but suddenly Will's chest feels incredibly sensitive, like one touch is enough to overload him. And his neck kind of hurts too, just underneath the jaw where his scent glands are. And actually his arse kind of hurts too.

Will goes very still. "I can't be in heat," he says, more to himself than to her.

"I can smell it on you," Elise says, her comb slowing as she regards him with too keen eyes. "You did not bleed this month, khaleesi."

Will is one of the lucky omegas; his heats are fairly sporadic and usually only brought on by intense and prolonged exposure to alpha pheromones. Biologically, it makes sense for heats to be harder for male omegas, because it takes a lot of internal rearranging for them to actually house a child, and because family doesn't tend to trigger these kinds of reactions, Will's really only ever had one heat, and that was because he was at a royal tourney where he was practically drowning in alphas.

It had been miserable and humiliating and exhausting, and Will had carefully stayed away from any such thing again.

But Hannibal is an alpha, and Will has been with him practically day and night for months now. He's worn Hannibal's clothing, he's slept with Hannibal at his side, and he's eaten food

from Hannibal's hands. If anything, he's lucky the heat has held off this long.

"Khaleesi?"

"Please go." It's difficult, to force out the words, and Elise hesitates so Will switches to Dothraki. "Go!"

Then he tries to salvage the mass of knots left behind, wondering what he could possibly do. He knows there are rumors of certain herbs that can delay heats or suppress them altogether, but Will's never used them or even seen them; procuring them would be impossible, unless he got incredibly lucky with the next village the khalasar came across. Not to mention that Will doesn't exactly have money or the knowledge of how to ask for such things in Dothraki. And even if Hannibal agreed not to touch him, the khalasar could not possibly stop for an entire week until Will's fever recedes, but to ride out in the open with all of the riders staring at him when he's open and dripping is beyond comprehension.

"You smell . . . distressed," Hannibal says quietly, and Will smacks him with the comb.

"Maybe I'm just pensive tonight."

Hannibal rubs ruefully at his arm. "Or maybe you are merely violent. As usual. Shall I expect to wake up to a knife to my throat, my khaleesi?"

"How mundane. I would make your death slow."

Hannibal just smiles, because of course he finds death threats amusing. Or perhaps he knows Will would never do it. Either way, he rescues the comb from Will's knots and begins to comb his curls methodically and gently, to the point where Will ends up leaning against Hannibal's chest and beginning to doze off. Normally, he wouldn't, but he's an omega approaching a heat, and Hannibal is safety and warmth and touch and he's half asleep before he knows it.

When he wakes up again, it is because he is cold, mostly because Hannibal is sitting at the end of their bed and running the comb with a steady hand through his own hair, which could rival many of the ladies in court for length.

Perhaps the sight shouldn't bring a lick of flame into Will's belly, but Will knows exactly what the length of Hannibal's braid means and he blames it upon his impending heat that he crawls out of his warm cocoon and wraps his arms around Hannibal's neck and takes a few good sniffs of his own.

"I thought you were sleeping," Hannibal murmurs. He has to speak slowly, because Will's Dothraki is still terrible, but Will gets the gist.

"Let me?" he says, and Hannibal releases the comb with no fuss.

Combing his alpha's long hair is not something Will would ever have imagined he would end up doing, but it feels natural, the smooth strands of Hannibal's hand parting easily for him, the heat of Hannibal's back against his hands, the way Hannibal's scent goes thick and spicy.

Will thinks he could roll in Hannibal's scent forever and never become bored with it. And braiding it feels natural too, as natural as adjusting his brother's armor or mending holes in his pants, just strand over strand over strand, rhythmic and continuous, until he finds himself running out of hair to wind and hesitating just above Hannibal's waist.

Because this isn't his bother. This is his alpha.

Hannibal's shoulders tilt as he inhales. "You smell . . . Are you in heat, Will?"

"Elise says soon. Why, what do I smell like?"

"Like life," Hannibal says, turning to show Will the most serious expression he's ever seen on Hannibal's face. "Like fresh running water and spring grass and the bite of the wind as you ride. Like – "

If there is a Dothraki word for flattery, Will does not know it. So instead he just seals his mouth over Hannibal's to shut him up.

"You taste divine too," Hannibal informs him.

"Tasting is not the most important part of a heat," Will says tartly, and it's easy, after so many months of riding, to swing his legs over Hannibal's lap and straddle him. Hannibal jerks, probably in shock, but Will clings on stubbornly and grinds down until Hannibal's pupils go dark and wide. "How do I *feel*, Hannibal?"

Hannibal hisses through his teeth. "Like a dream, sent to swallow my heart and my mind."

"You are entirely too verbal for this," Will sighs, and he relishes the way Hannibal leans close when Will strips his shirt and tosses it aside. He'd been bathing before Elise attacked his hair, so right now he knows he just smells purely of himself and, since he's been squirming around on Hannibal's lap, of Hannibal. An alpha's nose is much more sensitive than an omega's, so Will can only imagine what he smells like to Hannibal, but Hannibal's heaving chest is answer enough.

He manages to get one hand down Hannibal's pants before Hannibal stops him.

"What?"

"You said no," Hannibal says, looking wary in a way Will's never seen before, not even when Will was stealing his horses and his weapons and his blankets. "Before."

Will shrugs. "And now," he says, "I am saying yes."

"If it is what you want."

Will rolls his eyes, because *alphas*, honestly. He leans down and kisses Hannibal again, because alphas are just as susceptible to omega pheromones as omegas are to alpha ones, and he is a little curious to see what Hannibal is like under the influence of a rut. If he smiles into that kiss when there is a definite change in Hannibal's lap that makes him groan when Will wriggles again, well, that's his own business.

“Well,” Will whispers into Hannibal’s mouth, enjoying the way Hannibal’s chest heaves as he struggles for breath, “if you don’t give me what I want, maybe I’ll just take it. That is our way, is it not?”

“Moon of my life,” Hannibal replies. “You can have anything you desire.”

“Good,” Will says. “Because what I want right now is to make sure we both can’t walk straight tomorrow, and then do it over and over and over again until my heat is done. Think you’re up for the challenge, alpha mine?”

Hannibal snarls at him, eyes gone black and teeth bared, and really, that’s the only answer Will needs.

They smell absolutely rank by the time Will’s heat subsides. It’s perfect.

After so many months alone, Will almost has forgotten that other khalasars and khals exist. All he’s known, really, is Hannibal and Tobias and Abel and Marissa and Elise, so he thinks it’s pretty understandable that when the rival khalasar comes thundering up, he’s startled enough to not at all be insulted when Hannibal steps right in front of him and his bloodriders fall into formation around them.

“Khal Eldon,” Hannibal says, proud and unflinching.

The khal sneers at them. And Will is aware, distantly, that some of Hannibal’s riders thought he was a fool to bind himself to a khaleesi who could barely ride one day without having to be carried into a tent to heal, but the clear disdain on the rival khal’s face is still shocking, because his braid is nowhere near as long as Hannibal’s.

“You mate with an outsider. You have no respect for our ways. You are no khal.”

Hannibal shifts, ever so slightly, but it’s still enough for his braid to swing behind his back, a warning and statement both. “I fought by blood and horse for my riders, and now I am khal,” he replies. “I took my omega from outsiders the same way you took yours.”

“That thing will never be a khaleesi.”

“This thing,” Hannibal says coolly, “is my khaleesi. And if you seek to say otherwise, you will pay in blood and braid.”

“I was a khal long before you were even a speck in a horde,” Eldon sneers. “You won’t last a second against me. I’ll take your khalasar and your braid and your omega, and then I’ll burn them all with joy in my heart.”

Hannibal goes very, very, very still, and Will takes a step back without meaning to because Hannibal’s scent has gone sharp and acidic, and although he really does wish to see Hannibal defeat Eldon he also just washed his clothes and has no desire to get blood all over them

again. Eldon seems to take Will's move as a mark of fear, because his grin gets wider, but Hannibal doesn't even pause as he stalks forward.

There's no signal, no horn to announce the duel, no cheering crowds to watch, nothing. One moment Eldon is grinning down and Hannibal is glaring up, and the next, they're charging full tilt at each other, coming together with a thunderous crash of blade on blade. Eldon is pure strength, like a bull pawing at the ground before charging forward, but Hannibal just steps to one side and casually kicks out his knee. It's not enough to disable him, but it does make Eldon screech, and Hannibal leaps out of the way of the next blow and slices Eldon neatly in the hamstring.

Eldon does fall, then.

"You are a coward," he spits. "You expect a foreigner to bear you a son that can follow you? I think that thing will bear you nothing but ashes and dirt."

For one moment, Will thinks, *Oh no* because enraging an alpha is a good way to make them lose all sense of direction, of rationality, of thought. And battle requires thought, even if it is long-drilled instinct, and Hannibal has just spent a week lavishing attention on every part of Will that he can. He didn't bite Will, but that doesn't really matter; if Hannibal went into full alpha rage, Will honestly doesn't know if he would win or lose.

Then he meets Hannibal's eyes, sees the calm in the storm, and thinks, *Oh yes.*

Hannibal slips under Eldon's lunge and breaks his arm in one clean movement. A shove sends the very surprised khal to the ground, and Hannibal grabs his braid and yanks it back just in time to bear Eldon's throat for Hannibal's arakh to make an appearance.

"Even if Will did bear me nothing but ashes and dirt," Hannibal says, not even winded, "those ashes would smother your child to pieces in its sleep."

And then he slits Eldon's throat.

That night, when Hannibal presents him with a steaming slice of meat, Will looks at him – really, actually *looks* at him – and sees, for the first time, not a blank wall, but rather a blurry canvas. One is unreadable and the other merely requires some hard work, and Will has spent the past seven days becoming intimately acquainted with every inch of Hannibal's body; right now, reading his face is the easy task.

"So this is how the great Khal Hannibal deals with his enemies," Will says softly. "He eats them."

Hannibal doesn't even blink. "We eat the goats and dogs for sustenance, to give us strength to move on. Yet we are the considered the ultimate predator; why should we abstain from the prey that would give us the greatest strength?"

"One day, someone is going to eat you."

Hannibal laughs, lounging back as though the idea is more amusing than terrifying. “Perhaps, one day, yes. If I am lucky, perhaps it will even be you, my khaleesi.”

“I hardly think the dosh khaleen would take an eater of khals into their ranks.”

“The dosh khaleen would be fools to turn you away.”

The meat actually smells very good, laden with spices and dripping with sauce. Will can feel his mouth watering even more with each inhale of the delicious scent. He has no doubt that Hannibal will wait as long as it takes for Will to give into his hunger and curiosity; Hannibal’s probably already eaten his share.

“Why now?” Will asks. “You have never tried to feed me this before.”

“I will give you only the best, my khaleesi. And you will need your strength in the months to come.” Hannibal’s smile is all teeth as he leans forward. “Can you feel it, Will? Our child, sleeping in your stomach and growing day by day. They will be the best of both of us, and for them, I will find only the best pigs to sate your hunger.”

“You can smell them?”

“Yes.”

Will sniffs at his arm. He does smell a little like Hannibal, but he put that down to the natural mingling of their scents after a heat spent indulging in copious amounts of sex. Perhaps he should have paid more attention to the timing.

Still, there’s no sense in worrying about it. Even if Hannibal is wrong, Will cannot say he is not flattered by Hannibal’s kill.

After all, in the old days, matches between alphas and omegas were not fancy processions and vows spoken under the watchful eyes of septons. They were fierce and violent, and sometimes omegas would kill the alphas and sometimes they would accept them, but either way, alphas would always, always hunt for their omegas. The very best would down huge bears and enormous deer to impress their chosen, otherwise they might lose their heads or throats instead to unimpressed omegas.

Will’s alpha has brought him a human.

And it tastes delicious.

The khalasar turns towards Vaes Dothrak, which has the bonus of infuriating Chilton into a temper tantrum. He actually storms right into the tent and –

“Good gods above, put on some *clothing*, have you no shame!” he wails.

Will just shrugs and tugs a blanket around his shoulders. This is his personal tent, after all, and if Chilton is going to barge past the guards, then it’s not Will’s fault what he might see. Hannibal might burn Chilton’s eyes out for getting a glimpse of Will with a rounding belly

and not a stitch on him, but Will's sympathy for Chilton faded a long time ago, if it even ever existed.

"I want my army," Chilton says, once Will is securely buried under the covers.

"Hannibal does not break his promises," Will yawns.

"I want it *now*. The more time we waste running aimlessly all over the plains, the harder it will be for me to defeat King Cordell! Have you forgotten everything you ever learned about statecraft?"

"We are not running aimlessly anywhere," Will tells him, because it's the truth. "The khalasar is heading towards Vaes Dothrak. We have been summoned by the dosh khaleen."

Chilton waves his hands in the air as though they're on fire, jaw working in fury. The months have not treated him well; his clothes are wrinkled and dusty and stained, he has sunburn on his shoulders and face, and his hair is cut ragged from where he's attempted to maintain it on his own. He's an alpha too, but after prolonged exposure to Hannibal, Chilton's scent barely registers to Will at all. He certainly couldn't command or intimidate Will.

"If there's anyone who should be doing summoning, it's me! I've no interest in those ragged old crones, *I want my crown*!"

"So go and get it," Will mumbles. He really could care less about what happens to the Iron Throne. Why would he, when he could remain here, riding with the khalasar by day and sleeping in Hannibal's warm embrace at night? There is no expectation to wear fine clothes or eat the proper way or act as an omega should. He is a khaleesi, second only to his khal, and Will can't think of a better way to end his days.

"Fine," Chilton snarls, and then Will flails when Chilton reaches in and yanks him out. "If Khal Hannibal won't give me an army, then *you* will. The North will rally to your banner, and if not, I think even your body can fetch enough money for sellswords to take back my crown."

"You take me from this tent," Will says softly, "and Hannibal will cross the Narrow Sea to get me back."

"A fine lie you've conjured up for yourself," Chilton laughs, tightening his grip on Will's arm. "That khal can find himself a thousand women in a fortnight. Why would he ever come for you?"

Which is when Will whacks him in the throat and watches him drop like a stone.

Will crouches by Chilton's wheezing face and smiles, and he's spent so long with Hannibal that it's easy to adopt that cold, heartless expression. Chilton's paling face certainly is worth it. "You would do well to remember," Will says softly, "that I am a khaleesi of the Dothraki now. The only reason you are alive right now is because, quite honestly, I do not have the patience to wait for Hannibal to cut you apart and you're certainly not worth the effort me to kill you."

Then he stands, and for once, Chilton's frantic eyes remain on his face instead of his naked body, so Will counts it as a win.

"Now get out," Will orders. "The next time you barge in here without express invitation, I'll tie you to a horse and drag you all the way to Vaes Dothrak."

Watching Chilton flee from the tent is a sight Will promises to forever cherish, and it gets even better when Chilton runs smack into Hannibal and falls ungracefully on his behind, gaping up like a landed fish. Hannibal, being Hannibal, just stands there with a blank face, and Chilton squeezes out on his hands and knees, babbling all the way, until he takes off like Will's pack of wolves are on his heels.

Then Hannibal looks at him, and the blankness melts away to reveal heat and pride. "You will have him dragged to Vaes Dothrak, will you?"

"He raised a hand against the bearer of your child."

"Laying a hand on you would be reason enough for me to flay him alive," Hannibal says, and that also shouldn't make flames lick into Will's belly but at this point he's mostly given up rationalizing. Hannibal looks and smells wonderful, and if it makes all of Will sit up and pay attention when he gets close, so be it. It's not like Hannibal is immune to watching Will with a somewhat dopey expression on his face.

When Hannibal starts running his hands over Will's torso, though, Will squirms away. Becoming pregnant has not lessened the sensitivity of his skin at all. "I'm not hurt."

"I am not allowed to touch you?"

"Not if you want the khalasar to leave on time."

"To hell with the khalasar," Hannibal snarls, and topples them both into bed again as Will laughs.

Vaes Dothrak is intimidating. There are no gates, no walls, no castles and barracks lining the edges. Just two enormous horses that rise proudly over the road to mark where the Great Grass Sea ends and Vaes Dothrak begins. It's an important marker, because the dosh khaleen rule Vaes Dothrak, and what the dosh khaleen say, the Dothraki must follow. Even Hannibal, with an uncut braid and one of the biggest khalasars, bows to their rules and stores away his weapons as every khalasar does.

Still, it's not nearly as intimidating as what Elise says to him.

"They want me to *what*?"

"Eat a raw horse heart that Hannibal procures for you," she repeats. "It's a way to test the mettle of a khaleesi and a khal, to ensure that only the strongest live. And to read the omens for your child, of course."

From the grim way Hannibal had been eyeing the horses this morning, no doubt he would find it challenging to cut a heart from a horse without drawing a weapon in Vaes Dothrak. Yet when he had kissed Will good-bye, he had not seemed worried or concerned, not even a little bit, and Will lets that soothe the fluttering in his chest.

Hannibal had no doubts he could do it. And Will has no doubts that his alpha can procure a heart.

Will puts one hand on his stomach. He still can't smell the child, even if his stomach is most certainly a little rounder and a little firmer now. Hannibal likes to spend ages curled around his stomach, sniffing and murmuring in a mixture of Dothraki and Westerosi, and his bloodriders have grown ever more protective of him. It makes sense; Will now carries Hannibal's heir.

Okay, Will thinks. *For you, dearest one. And for your alpha father, yes?*

The dosh khaleen make Will stand on a little platform, with the crones ranging around him and eyeing him from head to toe, muttering amongst themselves. Will of House Graham might have shied away, but as a khaleesi, Will just meets their eyes and dares them to comment. He is the omega of the great Khal Hannibal and the bearer of his child; these old crones cannot possibly match him.

Perhaps it is the right thing to do, for the oldest crone of all smiles faintly at him, just before they withdraw as Hannibal comes triumphantly into the tent.

"Moon of my life," Hannibal says, offering the still steaming heart.

Will grasps it firmly; it's slippery with blood and he doesn't really want to drop it and have to pick it off the floor to eat. "My sun and stars."

And then Hannibal backs away, and Will is alone. So he takes a deep breath, locks eyes with his alpha's warm ones, and then takes one bite. Chews. Swallows. Takes another. Breathes. Bite by bite, the heart slips into his stomach, and while it's not the most pleasant sensation, at least Hannibal's gaze never once wavers from Will's, and he almost loses himself in the routine of bite, swallow, look at Hannibal, bite, swallow, look at Hannibal. The rest of the world fades out – the chattering of the riders gathered, the chanting of the dosh khaleen, the crackling of the fire. It's just Will and Hannibal and this heart, and it's perfect.

And, of course, their child, who chooses that exact moment to make Will's stomach suddenly rebel.

This time, as Will crouches and heaves and tries desperately not to vomit, he knows he is not imagining the sudden silence that falls in the tent. *Settle, dearest one, settle,* he thinks desperately. *I am here, your alpha father is here, your khalasar is here. You are safe, dearest one, and we will love you to the end of your days.*

He wonders, idly, what his parents might say, if they saw him now. Half naked, dressed in rough clothes, hair wild and untamed, skin tanned, face and hands drenched in blood, stuffing his stomach with a raw bloody heart surrounded by chanting crones and cheering riders.

But his parents are dead, and Will is a lord no longer.

I am a khaleesi of the Dothraki, he tells himself, and then he chews the last mouthful and swallows it anyways, because for his alpha and for his child, Will can do anything.

The sheer pride in Hannibal's eyes is liberating.

"The prince is riding," proclaims the old crone, and her voice is soft but the words echo like the clash of steel on steel. "I have heard the thunder of his hooves, swift as the wind he rides. His enemies will cower before him. And their wives will weep tears of blood. The stallion who mounts the world. The stallion is the khal of khals. He shall unite the people into a single khalasar. All the people of the world will be his herd."

So Will does the natural thing: he stands up and puts his newly learned Dothraki to the test. "A prince rides inside me! And – "

"Too bad," Chilton says, pressing his blade ever so gently to swell of Will's stomach. "Oh, this ceremony is very nice and all, but, you know. Needs must. I'm already going to rule the world, and I needn't have competitors from ravenstag bastards."

The tent goes silent again, even as the dosh khaleen hiss in fury.

"Put that away, you idiot," Will snarls. "The dosh khaleen will roast you alive for this."

"Ah, ah, ah," Chilton taunts, taking another step forward as Will is forced back. "Tell your khal not another step. Your khal has dragged me all over the Dothraki sea and never across the one sea I really need it to. He certainly bought you, Will – that child in your belly is proof of that – but he never paid for you. So! Here is my new deal: he can give me the army and the crown he promised me, or I can take you away and find a new army."

Hannibal's face doesn't change, which seems to frustrate Chilton, but his eyes, oh his eyes.

"Even you wouldn't take a child from his alpha," Will says, because Hannibal's bloodriders are circling even as Hannibal leans forward, tension in every muscle, and Will would rather leave this tent with all parties alive so that he can kick Chilton out of Vaes Dothrak himself. "You know better."

"Oh, he can have the brat," Chilton says airily, and this time he presses hard enough that Will can't stop the pained gasp that escapes when he pierces skin. "I'll cut it out of you and leave it for him. You can't exactly fetch a good price with a swollen belly, now can you? But you will get me an army, Will, even if I have to sell you until you are broken beyond recognition. Perhaps the tongue will go first; I think I can do without hearing that voice of yours ever again."

"That. Is. Enough."

The words are slow and heavily accented, but they are methodical. Will watches the way Chilton's face turns white with understanding and smiles through the pain.

“You will have your crown, Frederick Chilton,” Hannibal says. “A golden crown, in fact. And an army that will tremble to behold you in all of your glory, for the rest of all of your days. I always keep my promises, after all.”

The sword wavers. Lowers. Slips.

Will takes a deep breath, and this time when Hannibal steps forward, Chilton backs away, allowing Hannibal to take Will’s shoulders and press a hand to his stomach. Will unashamedly presses his face to Hannibal’s bare shoulder and breathes in the scent of his alpha, of spice and meat and home. Hannibal is with him; Hannibal would die before he let harm come to Will and their child, even from a spineless drunken coward like Chilton.

“Excellent!” Chilton says, beaming. “Now we can carry on. I’d love to see how you’ll get all that blood off, Will.”

“You will never see Will again,” Hannibal says absentmindedly, but he says it in Dothraki, so Chilton just keeps grinning that stupid smile – right up until Tobias neatly wrenches his arm out of his socket and Abel stomps on his leg until he folds to the ground. Then he just screams.

They drag a struggling, screaming Chilton right over to them and when he looks past Will, he realizes that Hannibal has left him and headed straight for the nearest torch.

Will frowns. “Are you going to set his head on fire?”

“Why not?” Hannibal says. “He wanted a golden crown.”

It’s not that Will objects to Chilton’s death. But he watched his advisors be put to flame and he knows it’ll take a damn long time for Chilton to burn. His hair will catch, of course, but Chilton doesn’t have much of it anymore after so many months being dragged across the Dothraki sea, and Will really doesn’t want to have to stand here and watch for hours as Hannibal determinedly presses new torches to Chilton’s face.

As Hannibal grabs the nearest torch, his belt of golden coins gleams, and Will has a new idea.

“I have a better idea,” Will announces, and he says it in Dothraki, but the way Chilton looks at him with undisguised hope makes him ever more certain of himself.

Chilton had put a blade to his child, after all, and interrupted his damn ceremony.

Hannibal cocks his head, eyes gleaming. Will knows that he is not alarmed at the idea of Will speaking back to a khal, but rather more intrigued as to what, exactly, Will wants to do. Hannibal had gotten bored of Chilton ages ago, but Will had prevented him from harming Chilton or tossing him off the khalasar, so Will knows that Hannibal thinks he might still harbor some mercy towards Chilton.

Will pads over to Hannibal and nudges his alpha’s neck, smiling as Hannibal’s immediate reaction is to scent him back and put one powerful arm about his waist.

“And what is your idea, moon of my life?” Hannibal murmurs.

Will lets his smile go flinty and sharp as he pulls away, revealing the belt of golden coins that he liberated from his alpha's waist whilst Hannibal was busy scenting him. It was one of Will's bride-gifts, after all, so Hannibal just laughs, even as Will inclines his head to the great boiling pot where the dosh khaleen had stirred herbs and potions to divine the fate of their child.

"A true golden crown," Will says simply. "Exactly what he once asked for when we first met."

Hannibal's eyes go dark with pleasure, and he kisses Will once on the forehead before he seizes a great strand of golden coins and lobs it straight inside the pot that other Dothraki empty on Hannibal's approach. The Dothraki close in again, chanting and murmuring in the background, but the dosh khaleen are silent. Will supposes molten gold does not really count as a weapon that one can carry, but mostly he just watches as Chilton makes nonsensical pleading noises and scrabbles against Tobias and Abel's unyielding hold.

"Will," he screams, "Will, please, tell them to stop, Will, please!"

Elise touches his shoulder. "Look away, khaleesi. You'll upset the child."

"No," Will says, and brushes her off. "He took me from my home and had every intention to watch me suffer just as much as he is now, all for a crown and throne across the sea. He threatened my child. I will watch."

"Khaleesi – "

By then, it's too late. In one great moment, Hannibal heaves the bubbling, hissing pot of gold off the fire and crouches in front of Chilton, smiling so gently one could hardly imagine he was holding a burning pot in front of him. Chilton freezes like a rabbit caught in the eyes of a giant wolf, and so it is dead silent when Hannibal says, clearly and loudly in Westerosi, "Here is the crown I promised you, Frederick Chilton."

The smell is terrible, and the sight nearly brings the heart back up from Will's stomach.

But Will's stomach is still bleeding from the sword that threatened their child. He still can hear Chilton's taunts ringing in his ear. He still remembers how Chilton ordered him dunked into ice cold water and gagged him. And so he stares and sears the image into his memory, because he never wants to forget the kind of alpha Hannibal is – and the kinds of deeds Hannibal will do for him the moment he asks.

Later, as he washes off the blood in the stream under Hannibal's watchful eyes, he asks, "So will you feed me Chilton as well?"

"No," Hannibal says, immediately and without judgment. "Fear makes the meat bitter. And some pigs are not worth you. He will get his wish; he will remain adorned with a golden crowd for all the world to see, and they will tremble to know our wrath."

“The wrath for a lamb,” Will says, smiling. He knows what kind of names some of the Dothraki call him behind his back, and not all of them mean it kindly. “I think they will wonder if it was worth it.”

“Ah, my khaleesi,” Hannibal murmurs, pressing a hand to his stomach. “Do you not know? It is the wrath of a lamb that one must fear above all else.”

Chapter End Notes

Next up: A Dance with Fireflies, wherein Will meets a fox and a cheese merchant.

A Dance With Fireflies

Chapter Summary

> Will meets a wine seller. Hannibal reveals his final and most damning secret. A man is turned into a firefly.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The dosh khaleen summon Will again only three days after they read the omens, and Hannibal brushes it off but Will can still sense his worry. Partially, he can read it in the little crinkles around his alpha's eyes, but mostly it's in Hannibal's scent, the way it thickens and gains a note of anxiety and concern.

"They have already declared the child fit," Will says, testing the waters as he runs a comb through Hannibal's hair.

Hannibal grunts as Will tugs out a knot. He's gotten better at letting Will groom him, even if he still playfully insists that Will can't put paint on him correctly, but he can't argue that Will is unable to properly weave a braid, and it soothes something in them both for Will to comb thoroughly through Hannibal's hair and get out every knot and tangle and snarl until it is one long wave of darkness from head to waist. It's the little things that preserve the bond between alpha and omega, and grooming goes hand in hand with scenting.

"They have made a prophecy for our child," Hannibal corrects. "It is not the same thing. Not all prophecies come to pass."

Once upon a time, a prophecy had stated that the next son of House Graham would be the king beyond the wall.

So, yes, Will is very aware that not all prophecies come to pass.

But this prophecy was not made by witches for hire. This prophecy was chanted by the dosh khaleen, the ruling crones of the Dothraki. And the dosh khaleen have asked for Will to come alone, without Hannibal, without his handmaidens, and without his bloodrider bodyguards. And it's not that Will needs protection, but his Dothraki still isn't perfect, and now with a child stirring in his belly, his desire not to offend the dosh khaleen is stronger than ever.

Hannibal leans back against him, and Will shifts to accommodate his weight without thinking. "My khaleesi," he says, "you have faced down traitors and wolves and cannibals. Surely the crones do not frighten you?"

"With that tone," Will says tartly, "those crones will chase you out of the city."

“Ah, not with the stallion who mounts the world riding in my mate’s belly,” Hannibal retorts.

“Do you really think they’ll mount the world?”

Hannibal is silent for a long moment, and then he slips off of the bed and presses his face to Will’s belly, as though prostrating in worship. He rubs his scent onto Will and kisses his skin and strokes his waist, and Will wonders how he ever could have been scared by this gentle, cuddling, sniffing giant.

“Of course they will. They’ve already conquered me,” Hannibal professes, “just as they’ve conquered their bearer.”

And it is true. Will knows that truth down to his very bones. He hasn’t even felt this child moving yet, but he already knows that he loves it beyond comprehension or reason or explanation. He would die for this child. And Hannibal would do the same. All he has to do is look into his alpha’s eyes to see the depths of his devotion, bound irrevocably in the heat they shared and their growing bond of violence and sharing words in their two different languages. They have grown together to make one vessel, and they will ferry their child to safety no matter the cost.

“You are my whole world, Will; if they can conquer my world, then they can conquer our world, and you and I will leave a legacy that no one will ever forget.”

Will kisses him then, because he can’t resist the impulse. He also can’t resist the impulse to say, “Then we have a problem.”

“Hmm?”

“We need to find a name.”

“There is a saying you Westerosi have,” Hannibal says after a long moment where he actually visibly begins running a list of names in his head, to the point that Will can almost see them floating in the air around his alpha’s head. “A problem for tomorrow, yes?”

“Lazy,” Will scolds, but he buries his face into Hannibal’s shoulder all the same. Lazy or not, Hannibal is his whole world too, and he wouldn’t have it any other way.

The dosh khaleen try to present themselves to Will as one united faction. It would, of course, be more convincing if the crones in the higher back seats were not looking down their chins at him whilst the younger ones towards the front were practically dozing with their eyes open.

The High Priestess notices him looking and smiles. “Not everyone here approves of . . . outsiders. You do not know our ways.”

“I can learn,” Will replies, and he takes great pleasure in the way many of the crones blink at his Dothraki. It’s still not perfect, but under the careful tutelage of his handmaidens, the loving guidance of his alpha, and the fond exasperation of his bloodrider bodyguards, it is

moving forward by leaps and bounds. Most days, Will can spend an entire day speaking Dothraki, only reverting to Westerosi when he is sequestered in his tent.

“And so you have. You are not the first, of course; the khals have always married outsiders to bring new blood in. And because they think with the thing between their legs as opposed to the one between their ears.”

Will thinks he might like this High Priestess.

“Hannibal is not stupid,” Will says anyways, because Hannibal really isn’t.

The High Priestess shrugs, effortless, like the wind rippling through the grass. Will gets the impression that she has heard it many times before, and now it no longer means much to her. Perhaps, once a time, as a fresh young khaleesi with a khal’s child in her belly, she had said those same words herself. “Khal Hannibal is young and strong. He has made himself into a stallion, but all stallions can be coaxed to accept a saddle with kind words and sweet offerings.”

“You think I will stop him from raiding villages? He has raided several since we met, and even now he discusses raiding more with the other khals. I have not stopped him.”

“You would not convince him, child. You are a reminder, that is all, but reminders can be as powerful as ghosts from beyond the grave.”

Will raises his eyebrows. As far as he knows, Hannibal has had no other omegas before Will – at least, no omega that he has ever elevated to the position of khaleesi. And it is tradition for khals to take multiple omegas, but Will is young yet and capable of giving more children. Hannibal has no reason to seek out a new khaleesi until long after their child is born and grown. “Unless you are hinting at a very tragic childhood, I fail to see how I can remind him of anything.”

For some reason, his words seem to make the High Priestess incredibly amused. And perhaps he could have chosen his words better; no doubt Hannibal’s father and khal was horribly murdered at some point, for when khals grow weak they usually meet violent ends, and no doubt Hannibal’s mother or bearer is now either dead or stands with the dosh khaleen now. Tragedy seems to be the theme of Dothraki children, khals or no. Of course, Will has every intention of raising their child with Hannibal every step of the way, but something tells him that if he says that, he’ll just get more riddles from the dosh khaleen.

“Look at that,” she says softly, almost more to herself than the tent, “perhaps you have no need of your stallion’s fire. It seems your ice might suit you well enough.”

Will has not thought about ice in a long, long, long time. His furs were torn from him a long time ago, and the seasons in the Great Grass Sea wane and wax with rain and drought, not snow and fire. He imagines Hannibal in Wolf Trap, dressed in Dothraki leathers and slathered in Dothraki paint, wandering through the icy halls of his childhood, and cannot suppress his smile. Horses were not allowed in Wolf Trap’s halls, and he imagines that Hannibal certainly would not take easily to the walls of stone and darkness when he has lived his entire life under the open sky.

“As you say,” Will murmurs. “I prefer my stallion just as he is.”

The High Priestess regards him for a long moment, and then she nods sharply and sits down. It seems to signal the end of the meeting, for many of the dosh khaleen begin to rise among her and look towards the exits.

“I am glad to have met you and read the omens of your future,” she informs him, voice heavy with the weight of all of her years. “It was my honor to meet the man would who be a wolf and the man who would be a stallion; you two are truly the match the likes the Great Stallion could only dream of. One day when you find your way back to Vaes Dothrak, the dosh khaleen will be waiting for you, and we will embrace you as our own.”

Will carefully says nothing to this. He has no idea what he will do the day that Hannibal dies. The only thing he does know is that he has no wish to end up here, smelling of spices and fading into omen-reading as the world moves on around him.

“One day, perhaps,” Will says instead.

“One day,” the High Priestess agrees, and then she rises and heads for the exit.

Which is when her words finally sink into Will’s ears, and he thinks, *Would be a stallion?* Hannibal is a stallion. He is a khal, one of the finest the Dothraki can boast. He rides into battle fierce and unshakeable like the rest of them, as graceful and powerful on a horse as he is off it.

“You said ‘the man would be a stallion’.”

“That is exactly what Khal Hannibal is: a man would be a stallion. And a fine mate for a wolf a stallion would be, but you are no wolf. You are a ravenstag, are you not?”

Shivers run down Will’s spine. No Dothraki has ever crossed the sea, and none of the Houses of the Seven Kingdoms have come to the Great Grass Sea. Besides, even at their height, the ravenstags had only ever been found in the depths of the North. “Who told you that?”

“The Great Stallion, of course.”

This time, when the High Priestess smiles, Will takes a step back. Her smile is the kind he once heard about in stories – neither happy or sad, neither salvation nor damnation, just . . . present. It sets every instinct he has on defense, even though he is well aware that she need only yell, and Dothraki riders would cut down Will in an instant, bearer of the stallion who mounts the world or no. She is the High Priestess of the dosh khaleen at the heart of Vaes Dothrak; he is but a khaleesi, one among hundreds.

“Go and enjoy the markets, khaleesi. We will meet again.”

Will always loved the markets. For a child bound to the snowy, dreary corridors of Wolf Trap, the open markets were always a blessing, a place where he could wander and breathe

new smells, see new sights, hear new voices. His parents once even set a knight to follow him around, lest he bankrupt House Graham purchasing trinkets and toys.

Now, of course, with the ominous words of the High Priestess echoing in his ears, Will is in no mood to enjoy the markets, but he tries.

The markets here are very different. They shout in various languages and push their wares onto passing bystanders, but they almost fall all over themselves to obey the laws of Vaes Dothrak. Despite all the wealth some of the merchants clearly have, they are unarmed and many bow out of Will's path, recognizing his status as a khaleesi due to the bloodrider glowering at his back. They still insist on giving him gifts though, hoping, perhaps, to win his favor so that he might turn the khalasar aside should Hannibal set his eyes on their caravans or towns.

Will is hardly likely to do that, but he was the child of a lord once; he can accept gifts graciously like all the rest. Besides, what he cannot physically carry, Elise and Marissa gleefully accept.

The man who would be a stallion.

Will cannot stop thinking about the words. There are stallions everywhere here, the symbol of Dothraki might, and from the very first moment Will had ever laid eyes upon Hannibal, he had represented everything Will had ever heard about Dothraki – and feared. Hannibal is strong and fearless and merciless, with no qualms of ripping someone to shreds. He watched as men fought to the death during their wedding and smiled. He pillages villages and towns that do not pay him enough and takes pleasure in watching them burn and taking their desecrated idols to scatter along the road to Vaes Dothrak. He can fight on horseback as well as on foot, and switch smoothly from one to the other with hardly a second's hesitation. If Will is a Dothraki khaleesi now, Hannibal is a stallion, and always has been.

And to think, just this morning, I sat with Hannibal and laughed at him for poking fun at the dosh khaleen, Will thinks wistfully.

He wants that laughter again. He wants to return to the khalasar and slink into their tent and cuddle in their blankets. He wants to smell Hannibal again, he wants to play with his wolves, he wants to ride his golden wedding gift. But Hannibal is off doing whatever khals do when so many of them gather in once, and Will knows that his mind might wander down even darker alleys if he simply curled up in their tent with nothing to distract him.

So Will stays in the market. He laughs, smiles, makes small talk.

Which is when a very enthusiastic cheese merchant trundles up to him, beaming, huge mounds of cheese scattered around him. His Dothraki is rather jumbled, but Will gets the gist.

"I am afraid I must pass," Will says politely in Westerosi, to spare his ears further butchering of the Dothraki language, "I am quite full right now, and I would not wish to waste the taste of your crafts upon a full belly."

Unfortunately, instead of making the man go away, it just makes his face light up. “You are from Westeros, khaleesi?”

“Once upon a time,” Will says, smiling.

A bead of sweat trickles down the man’s brow, and he hurriedly mops it away. “I have heard stories of you, khaleesi,” he announces. “They say you were once a child of the North. A king of the North, even?”

“Once upon a time,” Will repeats dismissively, because the one side effect of his pregnancy he has not found amusing is his sudden distaste towards foods he once found not worthy of a second thought, and the smell of cheese is making his last meal begin to lurch towards his mouth once more. Of course, it’s also rather difficult to be king when one’s guards and house are wiped out; Will highly doubts he would be lauded as the King in the North if he returned now, dressed in Dothraki leathers, curls wild and untamed, his belly swelling with a khal’s heir.

Abruptly as a hawk diving down for a mouse, a red-haired woman cuts into the conversation, shoving the cheese merchant to the side with a smile so bright Will would almost say it was drawn on by the freshest, most vivid paints.

“Oh, do step aside, dear Franklyn, you’re making the poor khaleesi nauseous,” she scolds.

That sets off more mumbling in broken Dothraki from the cheese merchant, who is apparently named Franklyn, but thankfully Marissa takes pity on the poor man and steps aside to explain that no, Will is not about to have his entire cache seized or burned, he merely does not wish to be around too much of it.

The red-haired woman throws him a wink. “Will of House Graham, wasn’t it? I’d always heard you were the lone wolf type. Come along, I’ve got something that will be much more to your fancy than all of this cheese.”

Bemused, Will just sort of tags along. It’s been so long since anyone has called him a Graham that he follows almost by instinct. Even Abel has a sort of exasperated look on his face, and Abel’s usually the most tolerant of all of Hannibal’s bloodriders. They pass by more merchants who call out or nod to the red-haired woman – presumably they are all part of Franklyn the cheese merchant’s caravan – so Will just goes with the flow, passing by stalls of meats and flowers and livestock until, finally, the woman clambers into a wagon and emerges with a casket of wine perched on her hip.

“Now, *this*, my lord,” she says, patting at the casket fondly, “is the finest wine in the whole world. It’s all the way from Dorne, and I know you inherited your good taste from your Dornish mother!”

It’s the perfect topic to drive away thoughts of Hannibal and stallions and old crones. Will pictures his mother, struggling in the Dorne sands or wandering the fabled water gardens, and cannot help but smile. His mother loved the snow and hated the heat. “No,” Will says, “my mother was not from Dorne.”

It doesn't really matter, of course. All of the noble houses have intermarried at some point.

"Well, I assume after months of drinking the piss poor excuse for Dothraki wine, you're eager for a taste of real Westerosi fine." The red-haired woman sets the casket down and begins hunting down a cup; in Will's mind, he amuses himself by casting her as a little red fox, digging eagerly in the snow for the perfect prize. "Ah ha! Here, my lord; if it's not to your liking – although I am betting you'll be dying for a second sip – we'll just have to try, try again."

Will freezes.

Once, when he was a boy, he had been fascinated by the words and sigils of the noble Houses. His favorite had been his own House's of course, closely followed by House Bloom and House Lecter. However, his tutor had schooled in every House's words, because he was the second son, the spare heir, and the likelihood of him being given away in marriage and joining another House had seemed the foregone conclusion.

He has vivid memories of tracing over the flying boar of House Verger, with three words etched on its proud wings: *Try, try again*.

Will looks at the red-haired woman, really looks, and takes in a deep breath. He is in the heart of Vaes Dothrak. He is a khaleesi. He is a ravenstag, and the one thing ravenstags were always, always renowned for was their inexplicable ability to see into the hearts of men with their eyes of gold. It had saved them from hunters for thousands of years.

I am a ravenstag, Will tells himself, because being a wolf is nice and all, but in his heart of hearts he has always known exactly what he is.

Will looks and sees: *That is my best wine* and *He is actually shorter than I thought he would be*. Innocent thoughts, but her hand is trembling and Will's heart is racing. So he looks deeper, and he sees the fox smile that shines through her playful tone, the beta hiding underneath an omega's perfume, the thief masquerading as a wine seller. He sees *This will be the easiest lordship ever* and then, just like that, he knows.

He *sees*.

The fox looks at him, and her grin falters, just slightly. It's a beautiful act. If he hadn't been watching it, he might have taken it for general nervousness.

Will clears his throat. "The smell. That is all. Perhaps another time?"

"Oh, but you must! I insist. You will find no sweeter wine in all of the Seven Kingdoms!" When he tries to set it down, she points an imperious finger at Abel. "No, I won't have it, Lord Graham! Come, come, have your man take a casket back home. You can enjoy it in the comforts of home once your stomach has settled. I promise you that you will not regret it."

"Perhaps I am not in the mood for wine."

She actually laughs at that. “So many months among these savages, and you turn down polite company and good wine? My, how you’ve changed, Lord Graham.”

“Ah, but I am not Lord Graham,” Will corrects her. “I am a khaleesi now.”

“Well, then I insist, khaleesi.”

Will inclines his head – and then he holds out the cup first. It’s time to see if the fox will bite her own tail. “Oh, but I cannot possibly let this wine go to waste, now can I? You first, my friend, and then I shall remember you fondly every time I drink of your wares and honor your memory.”

It’s like every sense is on high alert. Will can see the minute way the fox shuffles her feet, the way she twitches her fingers, the way her eyes dart about. Ravenstags were not herbivores, of course; they hunted rabbits and squirrels the same way they consumed berries and leaves. And the larger the ravenstag, the larger the associated prey. Foxes were not uncommon to their diet, and even in human form, Will has caught and killed many a fox before.

“I cannot possibly – ”

“I insist,” Will parrots back, and this time the fox visibly shrinks back. Will wonders, briefly, if he has grown horns, but perhaps it is merely his tone, amusing and careful where hers has gone nervous and trembling.

“I really, I cannot – ”

Will takes one step forward. Then another. Then a third. For each step, the fox takes two back, quick little steps that do nothing to carry her out of Will’s path. “You will drink,” Will says softly. “Or I will pin you to this wagon with my own hands and force every casket in this market down your throat until your stomach bursts. And that’s when we will move on to drowning. I do not need weapons to kill in Vaes Dothrak.”

The fox swallows.

Her eyes dart to the left and it’s the only warning Will gets back a man bursts out of the wagon, letting loose a wild yell and tackling Abel. It’s a good distraction, but not enough; when the fox turns to run, Will neatly swipes her legs out from under her and watches with immense satisfaction as she falls flat on her face in front of him.

“You can’t do this!” she gasps.

“Oh, but I can. I am not just a khaleesi, little fox. I am a ravenstag, and there will be a reckoning for this.”

“Not if I have my own first,” she hisses, and then Will staggers back, gasping, as she leaps away, dagger bared and bloody in her hand and a long stab straight into the parcels Will’s been clutching to his chest.

When the rest of the Dothraki tackle her and kick the dagger from her hands, Will can see it in her eyes that she had meant to gut him, to plunge the dagger into the soft flesh of his

stomach and rip until his blood ran warm over her hands, all in the name of a lordship offered for the death of him and his child – and for the pleasure of closing her fox's jaws tight around his neck while tripping him with her tail, just to prove she could.

Will, because he feels like being equally dramatic, makes a point of raising his shirt so that she can see the full extent of her work – a single, tiny scratch – before Abel hustles him away, leaving her screaming and screeching in the background.

Hannibal is besides himself when he returns. His eyes, normally a fairly calm maroon, are practically black with fury, and he actually growls right in the faces of the fox and her accomplice when he barges into the tent where the two are tied with their arms above their heads, hoisted just high enough to be uncomfortable without risking impeding their ability to breathe.

The accomplice, the real wine seller who had smuggled the weapons and the fox into Vaes Dothrak, flinches away.

The fox merely bares her teeth.

Then Hannibal comes to him, and his *face*.

Will has never doubted Hannibal's affection for him. Even from the first moment they met, Hannibal has tried to be kind. He asked instead of demanded, listened instead of silenced, respected instead of ignored. He spends hours sniffing and scent-marking Will, he cuddles him every moment he can, he touches Will like a god worshipping at an altar.

But it's one thing to never doubt and another to *see* and right now, with all of his senses still dialed up because of the fox, Will cannot help but see.

Hannibal is wrecked.

"My khaleesi," Hannibal says, words rough even in Dothraki. "My wolf, my ravenstag, my moon."

"My sun and stars," Will answers, even as he touches Hannibal's face and revels in the way Hannibal's entire shudders just from that one touch. "My khal, my alpha, my stallion."

"Are you hurt?"

Will doesn't bother answering that; Hannibal would not believe anything he said. Instead he just bares his neck and lets Hannibal take in his scent, washed clean of the fox's touch, and his mood, safe and warm and happy to be back in the safety of Hannibal's arms.

Hannibal sets his teeth to Will's neck in return, and this time it is Will's turn to tremble. Biting is a private thing; Will has never seen it, and most pairs in Westeros cover up the bites. It's indecent to flaunt them.

Will wants it, though. He wants the blood and the pain and the bite, and he doesn't give a damn that half of Hannibal's riders are clustered around them.

Hannibal apparently does, though, because he sighs and just kisses him, once, twice, thrice, before he withdraws. A sharp utterance to his riders, and they drag the fox and her accomplice away, departing one by one until Hannibal and Will are alone again, and Hannibal is still touching him like the most fragile china in existence and it shakes Will to his core. He'd never thought Hannibal being gentle would be scarier than Hannibal being strong.

"It's all right," Will says, not sure if he's reassuring Hannibal or himself. "I am safe. *We* are safe."

Hannibal has to work his jaw for several minutes before he can speak. It's almost endearing. "I am told that there is a price upon you. A lordship and a castle, in fact, for you and our child. The King, it seems, is determined to have your head."

"He will not have my head. He has my mother's and my father's and my brother's; I think he has enough heads from House Graham. And he certainly will not have our child."

Hannibal's face visibly spasms when Will says that, and his hand is hot and heavy and shaking when it comes to rest on Will's stomach. It's startling, even more so than when he saw the fury on Hannibal's face when Chilton put a sword to him, because anger he understands, anger he has experience with, anger he can sympathize with. To see fear on Hannibal's face is like seeing a horse riding a man – it just doesn't fit, even though it might be standing right in front of him.

"Hannibal," Will starts, but Hannibal cuts him off.

"I thought we would be safe," Hannibal says, voice rough as if someone had taken fists to his throat. "I thought you would be safe here. We are so far away . . . I thought . . ."

"Of course I'm safe," Will says blankly. Hannibal has fifteen thousand riders alone in this camp, not to mention the fact that they are in the heart of Dothraki life in Vaes Dothrak. The other khals might not like Hannibal, but they will defend Will here, if only to defend their pride and their strength in Vaes Dothrak.

Hannibal laughs mirthlessly, slipping a hand underneath his shirt to press a finger against the scratch the assassin's blade left on him. "Someone already breached that safety."

"And I defended myself, did I not? I'm a ravenstag, Hannibal; I'll defend our child with my own teeth if I have to."

Normally, when Will reminds Hannibal of his own strength, Hannibal will smile or laugh or tease him with slow kisses and tickling fingers. Right now, it just seems to make Hannibal agitated, to the point where Hannibal's acid scent makes Will's own heart racing into a sympathetic frenzy at the scent of his alpha so on edge. It even makes him reluctant to reach out when his alpha lets go of him and begins pacing, although at any other time he would comfort Hannibal.

"You might have. You might have to do so many times."

“I assume Dothraki khals are fairly indiscriminate about killing rivals no matter how young,” Will muses, but he hugs himself all the same, reassuring himself with the slight swell that betrays the presence of their child. When their child is still in womb, Will has no such worries about defending him; he would kill with anything and everything he could get his hands on to protect his baby. But when their child is born and can run freely, can ride freely, can stride into battle with his own blade – that protection might be more difficult to offer.

Hannibal’s shoulder flexes, like he wishes to hold a blade in his hand. “Not just from the other khals,” he says. “From King Cordell. I thought he would ignore it; I thought we were far enough away. But the king will never stop sending assassins for you, not even if we went all the way to the far East.”

Hannibal says the words with the weight of prophecy, like a promise, like a death sentence.

Will scoffs. “Why would we go the far East? This is where our khalasar is, why would we ever leave?”

Hannibal whips around then, teeth bared and face a mask of fury. “King Cordell will never stop hunting you and our child. Never. Even if I crossed the Narrow Sea myself and removed his head with my teeth, his nobles would never stop trying to kill you.”

The concept is ridiculous. Hannibal is a Dothraki khal; his place is here, in Essos, in the Great Grass Sea, in Will’s bed. But more importantly, Westeros is not a hydra. If they killed King Cordell, Will thinks the nobles would be more apt to start immediately killing each other than sending rogue assassins after an unborn child, even a ravenstag one.

“King Cordell wants my family dead,” Will says. “That I know. But I’m just one ravenstag, I am not enough to justify a lordship and such expense – ”

“It is not you. It is me.”

Hannibal looks . . . haunted. Like death has already wrapped her arms around him and is whispering sweet lies in his ear, like Will is already a ghost, like the khalasar and the Great Grass Sea is already ash before him. Will looks and sees *fear*, but it’s not the kind of fear that drives men to insanity and running as though their feet are on fire. It is the fear that drives men to grit their teeth and massacre thousands, born of hatred and rage and an all-consuming thirst for blood.

“Hannibal,” Will says slowly, because he thought he had cracked all of Hannibal’s masks but apparently not, “what are you not telling me?”

“I’m telling you,” Hannibal says, just as slowly, as though the words are being dragged out from his mouth one by one with pincers, shoulders so straight it’s like he expects Will to charge at him and stab him until he’s dead, “save yourself, kill them all.”

Will has never, ever given into his omega instinct. From a young age, his parents broke him of that, because he was not just an omega, he was a ravenstag and the son of House Graham. He was taught to growl instead of whine, to claw instead of bend, to rage instead of submit.

He met alphas head on and gloried in it, because they were so busy gaping at him they failed to notice when his brother smoothly outmaneuvered them.

Right now, though, Will blinks and finds himself on the far end of the tent, crouched and whining, every sign in his body tingling with alarm.

Because he knows those words.

He knows them very, very, very well.

Hannibal watches him with a wry, sad smile. It's almost like they've traded energies; now Will is the one agitated, and Hannibal the calm one. "What do you know of the fate of House Lecter, Will?"

"I know that King Francis killed Robertus on the Field of Fire," Will says, fighting to keep his voice from trembling. "I know that my uncle marched on Dragonstone with five thousand men. I know that my father set out to find Lady Murasaki."

"And the rest?"

Will almost wants to kick himself. Many houses do recycle their names – Will is probably the fifth or sixth William of House Graham – but the Lecters came from Old Lithuania. They had names so unique few Houses adopted them. And of them was –

"How is that possible?" Will whispers. "That ship sunk, Princess Mischa and Prince Hannibal died on that ship – "

"I did die," Hannibal interrupts, and his eyes are so red right now that Will almost stops breathing. "They took my crown right from my head and melted it down. They slit my sister's throat right on front of me. They branded me a slave and sold me in the markets of Essos, over and over until the khalasars came raiding. I stopped being Prince Hannibal Lecter the day your House marched on Dragonstone."

There have been many claims of people saying they were Prince Hannibal and Princess Mischa, and many more who claimed their deaths in hopes of gaining the immense bounty King Francis had offered. His father – and Will, by extension – had laughed many of them off.

He does not laugh now.

Eyes red like fire, his father had recalled, when Will's brother had begged him for a recounting of the day Dragonstone fell. *Fangs like the wolpertingers they rode, and so fast you could have sworn they were possessed of wings.*

Hannibal's eyes are red. Well, actually they are more like maroon, but they are red now. And Hannibal does have exceedingly sharp alpha fangs, even if he's been too polite to sink them into Will's neck. And Hannibal is exceedingly fast, even for a man of his size. And even the politeness – House Lecter was infamous for their insistence of politeness. It is why everyone

was so shocked when Robertus turned his nose up at the match with Lady Reba and ran off with a witch-girl.

“So you see,” Hannibal says, “you carry a ravenstag and a wolpertinger. A Graham of the North and a Lecter of Old Lithuania. No matter who sits on the Iron Throne, they will never stop hunting us.”

“Is that why you chose me?” Will asks, because he has to. “Is that why you took me from Chilton?”

Hannibal shrugs. “I was taking what I was owed. Your House took my home from me. I took the price I was owed for that betrayal.” With each word, he steps closer and closer and closer, until he is so close the last words are breathed right against Will’s face.

Will wants to ask if he’s just breathed his last, but the words are frozen in his throat.

Hannibal sets his sharp alpha fangs against Will’s neck, and Will shudders. It would be well within Hannibal’s rights to kill him, to tear out his throat and flay his skin from his flesh. There is just one problem.

Will has, perhaps, created the most tragic betrayal of all, because Hannibal has fallen in love with him.

Will has Hannibal’s heart.

Will carries Hannibal’s *child*.

Even though House Graham helped House Dolarhyde killed his brother, even though House Graham’s men killed his mother, even though House Graham drove Hannibal and Mischa out of the safety of Dragonstone, Hannibal cannot kill him now. Hurt him, surely. But killing him? Hannibal would sooner kill himself.

“I am sorry,” Will says, because he really did not intend to steal Hannibal’s heart.

Hannibal exhales and then he retracts his fangs from Will’s skin. “Don’t be. You were . . . a surprise. I would gladly have been surprised by you a thousand times over. You are magnificent, my Will, and I would have you no other way.”

For a long moment, Will just looks into Hannibal’s eyes, and this time there are no illusions, no masks, no façades. He just sees *Hannibal*. Not Khal Hannibal, not Prince Hannibal, not even Hannibal of House Lecter. Just Hannibal, his alpha, his sun and stars, his, his, *his*.

Hannibal loves him, and he loves their child, and that is all Will needs to know.

“So,” Will whispers, “what now?”

Hannibal kisses him like a benediction, on his forehead, on his eyes, on his lips, on his neck. “Now, my Will,” he says, and his voice is warm again, the Hannibal Will has always known, “I am going to take that assassin who dared to lay a hand against you and I am going to serve you the finest meal you have ever eaten.”

“Well then, alpha mine,” Will says, “then you’d better let me watch.”

Hannibal does actually let him watch.

They take one horse, dragging one of the assassins behind them because the fox one is too busy screeching and because Hannibal took one sniff of her and said she smelled too unclean, and ride out of Vaes Dothrak until finally they pass the edge of the dosh khaleen’s mandate, and then they get off and Will makes himself comfortable before the fire as Hannibal ties the man down and begins making tiny incisions as he slowly graduates to finer cuts.

The man screams and screams and screams, and Will glories in it.

Afterwards, among the fireflies that flicker around their small camp, Hannibal leaves the man dangling from a tree, skin and bones broken and restructured to give him wings of his own, and serves Will the finest meal he has ever eaten of freshly cooked meat, piece by steaming piece, so fragrant that Will licks at Hannibal’s fingers and laughs at the way his alpha pouts at him.

They make love under the stars, the way all Dothraki marriages are first consummated, and Will bites Hannibal’s neck and holds on until he bleeds, the same way Hannibal latches onto him, and they bite and hold until the sharp pain becomes the sweet, sweet fire of a mating bond.

“Let them come,” Will tells Hannibal as his mate groans underneath him, hands twitching helplessly in the grass. “Let them all come. We’ll tear out their throats and feast on their flesh and make a throne of their bones for our child.”

“My beautiful ravenstag,” Hannibal says. “In a thousand lifetimes, I could never have imagined I would find you.”

Except when he presses his hand to Will’s stomach, Will screams, because his stomach is *on fire* and when Hannibal pulls them closer to the light, Will sees that the little scratch the fox left is now an angry, angry red, tinged with green on the outside, and all he can think is, *Oh.*

“Will!” Hannibal shouts, and it’s the last thing Will hears before blackness takes him.

Chapter End Notes

Next up: The Winds of Wolf Trap, wherein crazy things happen.

The Winds of Wolf Trap

Chapter Summary

Will walks through death.

Chapter Notes

Warnings: I mean, not that my story is exactly pristine and clean, but this chapter mimics Dany's journey through the House of the Undying. Meaning I took great liberties to go as crazy as I've always wanted to. Therefore, some of these things have actual plot-related reasons for being here, and some of them are just cuz they were funny to me. Have fun sorting out which is which, my darlings.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will awakens on a golden bed.

It is warm and soft and when he strokes the sheets they flicker with sparks, like tiny fireflies, so Will spends a good long while just stroking the sheets and watching the sparks catch. He, like any other child of the North, respects fire the way any human respects that which may preserve life during winter, but with that respect came a healthy dose of fear; Will was never allowed so close to fire.

Still, Will does not tarry too long. He can see the sun painting the first few streaks across the sky, and no Lord's child worth their salt is the last to break their fast. It sets a bad example.

He admires his golden bed one last time, and then he's up and heading towards his clothes. They fit, but they're a little tight, and he makes a note to have the seamstresses start looking into his clothing. His wolfskins still will work, but as tight as they are now, they don't feel like they really fit anymore, and if they fall off Will's parents will never let him hear the end of it.

Men and women alike incline their heads as Will passes, and he nods in return. It is his due as the Lord's son, even though he knows they would bow for his parents.

Thankfully, he is not the last one to the hall. That honor goes to Abigail, who comes in bloody and with her hair askew.

"Abigail," Will's mother scolds. She had said, once, that all she had ever wished for was a daughter, but Abigail had been entirely uninterested in being either a daughter or part of

House Graham. She had shredded her dresses, shot arrows through her embroidery, and even once bowed to a visiting lord instead of curtsied. It had caused laughter then, but now that Abigail is a grown lady, there are only stony faces and disapproving whispers as Abigail enters dragging behind her a huge carcass.

The whispers grow even louder when Will catches sight of what, exactly, Abigail has slain.

“Oh, don’t look so worried, William,” Abigail says, rolling her eyes as she comes to a stop at the high table. “It’s just a stag.”

Will has to swallow three times before he can speak. “No, Abigail,” he finally croaks out. “That’s a ravenstag.”

And not just any ravenstag. This one is enormous, longer than Abigail is tall, with antlers that scrape deep furrows into the floor of the hall. The stench is horrendous; fresh kill or no, this ravenstag was old and the blood is thick and fills the air, its scent cloying and hovering on the back of Will’s tongue. Will wants to look away even as his eyes water, but he can’t, anymore than anyone else can. It’s a magnificent creature, in death as in life, feathers and fur blending into the perfect coat, marred only by the porcupine quills that dot its poor flanks.

A coat that is still moving, ever so slightly.

Will knocks over two chairs in his rush forward and still keeps going, ignoring the way his mother calls his name. The ravenstag heaves under his touch, nostrils flaring, and Will can’t help but smooth its fur and make comforting noises at it.

“It’s alive!” he says. “Please, help me, it’s alive.”

But no one comes to his side, not even the maester, and when Will looks up, he sees only the orderly line of people filing to the door, blind and deaf to his cries. He scrabbles to the great gaping wound in the ravenstag’s belly, a blow that slit it from side to side, and finds an even greater surprise there, nestled between its long legs: a baby, mewing and crying and splattered with blood. Will cradles it close and hums, and takes comfort in how it stares at him with liquid black eyes.

His mother comes and yanks him away, ignoring his pleas. “Mother – Mother, it’s alive, we can save it, please – ”

“Not now,” she snaps, shaking him like a miscreant puppy. “The King is coming and we need to pay our respects. Stand straight and wipe that look off of your face. The King’s House and our House have long been friends, and I will not allow you to mar our friendship.”

Only then does Will hear the thunder of approaching hooves and the baying of hounds and the roar of horns in the distance, so he subsides. His mother is always nervous when any ranking noble of King’s Landing comes to visit, mostly because there are so many rumors of unwashed, uncivilized wild men in the North, and she is anxious to prove that she made a wise choice when she agreed to pledge her hand to House Graham, despite all the old traditions and even older trees that surround the place. There will be time later, he reasons,

for listening, and so he cradles the poor baby close to his chest and falls into line as the courtyard comes to life.

The carriage that pulls up is garish and lurid red, searing to one's eyes, but nowhere near as garish as the boy that emerges with a crown atop his head.

Will's father hesitates, and then he kneels and the courtyard follows suit.

"Oh, yes, you might have been expecting my father," the boy-king says lazily. "Sadly, he passed on the journey – it is so treacherous, this long road north – and so I carry on in his stead. I am sure I will find a warm welcome here, of course."

"King Cordell," Will's father replies. "Welcome to Wolf Trap."

Perhaps it is the deferential tone or perhaps it is the immediate acknowledgement of his status, but either way, the boy-king's eyes light up and he practically bounds down the steps to clap Will's father heavily on the shoulder. "Oh, do get up! We're friends, you and I, just as our fathers were!" he chirps, eyes too bright. "And such lovely friends we are."

His gaze is like needles against Will's skin as he draws closer, and it is only through years and years of his mother's admonishments that Will avoids curling in on himself like a tiny bug.

"William Graham," King Cordell murmurs, each syllable exaggerated as though he is evaluating how well it flows off his tongue. "What a beauty you've become."

"Your Majesty," Will says, because that is what is expected.

He, of course, has no memory of Cordell of House Dolarhyde, but for Cordell to know him is not impossible. Many Houses present their sons and daughters to the King for blessings and acknowledgement after their first name-day, and Will was probably no exception. His father has told the story many times of how his brother, after being presented to the King and Consort, vomited all over Consort Mason and caused much laughter throughout the court as Will's parents scrambled to rescue the babe from the flailing consort.

Cordell leans in and takes a great sniff alongside Will's neck, and this time Will does jolt back.

Or tries to. Cordell wraps a powerful hand on his arm and stays his retreat, tsking at him. "Not so fast, William. You do smell lovely. I think the greatest bards in the land would have trouble finding the perfect words for you. And a gift! How lovely."

He snatches the baby ravenstag from Will's arms, ignoring his weak protests, only to make an unholy screech when the baby ravenstag whacks a defiant wing across his face.

"What is this monstrosity?" Cordell roars.

"Just a ravenstag," Abigail Hobbs says, appearing suddenly at Will's side, hair neatened and dress blood-red, eyes eager as the dagger clutched in her hand. "One with a wolpertinger's wings. An abomination. It is why I sought to end it."

“It is just a *babe*!” Will exclaims. “It has no ill intentions and means no harm! All it wants is its mother.”

“And all I want,” Cordell muses, “is no ravenstags at all.”

Will says, “No!” but it’s too late. Cordell closes his hand around the ravenstag’s throat and throttles it, ignoring the way it kicks and whinnies and flaps its wings desperately, ignoring the way Will lurches forward and has to be held back by guards, ignoring the way blood as dark as night stains his hands and elegant clothing. He squeezes and squeezes and squeezes until the poor thing finally goes still, its eyes going blank, and Will sobs because each squeeze is like a painful stab in his gut.

Cordell clicks his fingers and a guard runs over to take the corpse from his hands, but then a beautiful catdeer emerges from the inside of the carriage. It has cream-colored fur and delicate steps as it approaches the king, flanked by a downtrodden flying boar that dutifully lifts the edges of the lady’s dress as she glides forward.

“My king,” says the catdeer, “would you waste a chance for immortality? A ravenstag’s blood can do wonderful things.”

And Will stares, betrayed and adrift, because as the catdeer unveils her beautiful head he sees only Alana Bloom, the woman he was once pledged to marry, as she smiles sweetly at King Cordell and kisses him gently on the cheek.

“Ah, my wise queen,” Cordell beams. “Do tell me more.”

“A ravenstag is the embodiment of sky and land, air and earth, flying and running,” Alana says, like the priestesses she once claimed never to put any stock in. “The youngest were known to have a lifespan double that of a human’s. Would you not wish for a lifespan twofold, my king? Or even threefold?”

“My life,” Cordell muses, “and the raven’s and the stag’s. What a worthy quest, my queen, I shall do my best to fulfill it.”

The flying sow steps forward. Her wings have the rounded, hunched edge of a dog beaten often and harshly for the slightest mistake, and she hardly looks at the King even as she hastily fills a goblet with the dripping blood and sets it to her King’s lips.

It’s probably a good thing, because her eyes are filled with hatred and relief.

Will is so mesmerized by her eyes, which are screaming *die die die* and *once for luck and twice for courage and thrice for death* and *a threefold life means a threefold death*, that he misses the sight of the King until the screams make him startle, and then he beholds the sight of the gagging, struggling king, surrounded by thorns adorned with stag’s tines and dripping black blood as they wrap around the king’s head.

He does not scream when Abigail sinks a blade into his stomach. “Once for luck,” she says, and kisses him on the forehead.

“Twice for courage,” Alana says, and her blade joins Abigail’s in his gut.

“And thrice,” says the flying sow, Mason’s sister Margot, as she slides the last blade into Will’s cheek, “for death.”

Then, Will screams.

Will awakens on a golden bed with four eyes staring at him.

Then he quickly yanks the sheets up to his forehead, causing Abigail and his mother to laugh merrily at him.

“Do relax,” his mother says, patting gently at his feet. “We have our own tent and would gladly remain there, if not for the horses that were spooked this morning. I expect things to be put back as they were by nightfall.”

“I am hardly half dressed!” Will protests.

“I have seen all you have to offer,” Abigail sniffs, although her eyes gleam as she says it. “And trust me, I could not be less tempted by your chicken thin legs.”

Will stares, aghast, and then decides that retreat is the better part of valor and scrambles to the screens clutching his blankets, where he changes into his clothes as fast as he can in their protective shade, a chorus of soft laughter in the background. When he emerges, his mother gives him a sound kiss on the forehead and tugs gently at the embroidery.

“Oh, dear, I see someone will soon outgrow this skin.”

“I like this skin,” Will says, because this is the first wolf skin his father had ever given him and he enjoys the way he’s grown into it and how it has softened with repeated wear.

“Times change,” his mother tells him fondly. “And children grow. One day you will sew your own skin and wear it with pride.”

“That would require someone amendable to breed him,” Abigail says dryly.

Will looks at her and sees *I wish I could I wish I could I wish I could*, beating in the depths of her heart like a butterfly anxious to be free of a cocoon, jealously and longing mixed into powerful strangling threads, and so all he says is, “When I find an alpha worthy of me, you shall be the first to know.”

Abigail wrinkles her nose, because to stick her tongue out would be unladylike, and so Will emerges into the sunlight outside the tent feeling like a victor ascending to the next match.

His father takes one look at his face and grins, gesturing towards the nearest chessboard after a smiling servant gifts Will a heaping plate of food. His father had always said that Will had a natural affinity for chess, given that his own empathetic abilities could give him an advantage few had, and so one long winter when Will had been ordered abed due to a broken leg, his father had painstakingly taught him the game of chess. He’d been quite bad at it, at first, but

slowly he had blossomed, and now they play whenever they can, for his father takes great delight in both victory and defeat at his son's hands.

Today they play Lecters versus Grahams, because his father also enjoys lengthy anecdotes of history, and so as each piece is captured his father recounts another story.

"Ah," he says, when Will knocks down a castle, "that I suppose can be Dragonstone. What a fine castle that was."

"Did it take long to conquer?"

"Aye," his father confirms. "The Lecter men were loyal to the last, and spurred on by the viciousness of the Queen. She cut down six men before we even realized she was a threat."

"The fury of a wolpertinger," Will notes.

"The fury of a mother protecting her children," Will's father corrects, and takes one of Will's pawns. "She loved those two brats with everything she had, and to this day I am not sure whether they lived or died."

"You burned all the boats."

"Aye, we did, and put a great bounty on the rest. But the wolpertingers were renowned for their flight, not their sailing. Some days I wonder if the girl they brought back really was the Princess, or just another poor girl they dressed in royal clothing for the nobles to gawk at while the real one slipped through our fingers and raised an army in the East."

Will takes one of his father's knights. "And so would this be?"

"Robertus," his father says. "A great knight he was. Foolish, in the end, to spurn the Lady Reba for the witch-girl Murasaki, but we all were at one point."

"Any foolishness of yours did not bring about the end of your house," Will points out.

"Did it not?" Will's father says, and this time when he takes one of Will's rooks he leaves a trail of blood on the chessboard. At first Will thinks it is merely a scrape or a nosebleed, but then he realizes that the blood is dripping from a thick ring around his father's neck, like a noose of blood. "Take heed, my boy, for Grahams who go south never fare well."

"Father," Will starts, except then the first man-at-arms next to them goes stiff and then collapses, and then another and then another, all with heads rolling like overripe melons.

And Will remembers.

"Father," Will says, "you are dead."

"So I am," he acknowledges, and takes another of Will's pawns. "What of it?"

Will lifts his shirt and sees the blazing red line where the fox assassin laid poison into his gut, and when he gingerly pokes it, the pain makes him clench his teeth as his eyes water. "I think

I might be too."

"What of it?"

Will's fist opens without his conscious consent. The pawn he'd been clutching rolls aimlessly in the grass, as though it had been hollowed out and rounded, just as Will feels hollowed out. He feels adrift amongst a sea of dead, and he does not know what to do.

"So what was the point?" he asks, watching as the pawn continues rolling. "What was the point of it all? Of taking revenge for the slight against Lady Reba, of taking Dragonstone, of driving away the Lecters? Of the war and the kingship and the squabble for the throne? Of marrying and having children and growing old, when all ends in death?"

"Death," his father says calmly, "is relative."

The pawn shudders and goes still, although Will cannot see what barrier it has run against. When he prods his stomach again, he feels only pain, but now it is distant, like in the ancient past. "I think I am dead," he repeats. "I feel like they have taken my head, and with it the child that lived inside me."

His father lifts his hand, considering, and then he removes his head, leaving only the bleeding stump behind. He cradles it like he might a helmet, completely unmoved by Will's words and his own actions, and Will watches in horror as the mouth still moves.

Will does not scream when Will's father places his own head on the table beneath them.

"Cut off a ravenstag's head and it still has the power to bite," Will's father says solemnly. "Are you a ravenstag, Will? Or just a mewling child, whining about the unfair hand that has been dealt?"

Then, Will screams.

Will awakens on a golden bed with four eyes staring at him and a cold wind biting at his skin.

This time, the eyes are from two fox antelopes, with fur like the dying sun and eyes like daggers boring into his skin. One is old, with gray tufts along the ears, and one is so young that its paws are still a tad too large for its body. The old fox antelope licks solemnly at the young one, and then it shudders, falls, and goes still, its eyes dim before it hits the ground.

The young one, seemingly unbothered, steps forward and paws neatly at its face, until the visage of Will's father emerges from its voluminous fur.

This time, Will remembers. "You are dead," he says.

The person wearing the face of Will's father nods, almost agreeably. "Yes, I am. But death is just another face, Will of House Graham." So saying, he raises his hands to his face, paws neatly at the edges, and peels the mask away to reveal the new face, eyes and mouth bloody, of King Cordell.

“You are dead too,” Will says.

“Yes,” says the person wearing the face of Cordell, “and no. Death is relative here. Come, ravenstag; walk with me.”

The air is cold, but Will wraps the wolf skins around his Dothraki attire and strides forward to keep pace. For some reason, he does not think protesting that he is dead too will inspire any great sympathy in someone willing to wear the face of dead men. Silently, they walk down the hall together, past door after door after door, each painted different colors and with different sounds issuing behind them.

After passing a door slathered blue and purple, with the sounds of battle raging behind, Will finally plucks up enough courage to ask, “What is this place?”

“The beginning and the end,” the person says. “The crossroads and the endless road. The future and the past.”

“You said death was relative.”

“And so it is,” says the person, and when they turn, they smile at Will from a new face. It is not one he knows, with thick grey beard and stooping shoulders and a maester’s chain. “All who set foot in the river of death know this place from birth, and all who pass through carry the river’s mark.”

“My scar – ”

“Not that scar,” they chide. “Inside, Will. The scar inside.”

“I don’t know what you mean.”

“You did, once. I suppose you will again.”

They pass another door, black as night and lined with silver like the full moon, and this one is ajar. When Will risks a glance inside, he sees a great moose-lion, grey with age but eyes still sharp, staggering and stumbling as though drunk, a great gleaming scratch on its side and an flying-boar that nudges and nibbles at its heels, calling out, “Reba, Reba, Reba!” as though an answer might emerge from the mists that surround it.

He is not surprised when his companion gains the face of King Francis to guide him.

“Are you going to tell me a story?” Will asks, on a whim. “Only I tire of silence and strange visions in the dark.”

“Certainly,” says the person wearing King Francis’s face. “Which shall you like to hear? Of luck or of courage or of death? Or, perhaps, of love or of hatred or of change? Or maybe of gleaming towers or of violent seas or of rivers of blood? Choose wisely, ravenstag, for a story once begun holds all in its spell.”

“None so mundane,” Will scoffs. “I would hear a story I have never heard before.”

King Francis peels away his face, and below emerges that of a woman, with dark hair and even darker eyes and robes the color of flames. “A good choice,” says the person wearing a woman’s face. “There once was an omega named Murasaki, who came to court at the beckoning of her kith and kin. But in that court she saw deceit and hatred and slow death, and so she turned her attention to the few who might listen, and for her knowledge she gained a heart. And perhaps it was not hers to gain, but alas; what is given is not so easily returned.”

So saying, the woman produces a bleeding heart, and as she walks she places it carefully in a doorway, the door the color of silver and gold as it swings open, and Will glimpses a horse sprinting furiously through the land, the rider arrayed in clothes the color of night as they sweep down and seize a fox from the side of the road, the fox and rider laughing and laughing as they thunder into the night, each pace leaving hoof prints of blood in their wake.

“And so the prince followed his heart and took the omega to his secret tower and married her, and saw his kingdom fall into war,” continues the person, now bearing the face of a woman with bright silver hair and solemn green eyes, “and he kissed his newfound wife and left her to fight a war from which he never returned with a broken heart, a vial of poison, and a child sleeping in her belly.”

Will touches his own belly, still so slight in its roundness, and feels a kinship with the woman who died alone. “Is this a warning?” he asks. “From my past or from my future?”

“Both and neither,” says the person with a face with a thousand scars and a gaping hole where the nose ought to be. “Those who do not know history are doomed to repeat it. Where will you go, ravenstag, when your alpha goes to war?”

“Who are you to demand what I shall do when my Hannibal goes to war?”

The person stops and peels away yet another face, and then another, and then another, and then another, and then another, until Will loses count. The faces pile up in the doorway until the door, gold like fire, melts away, leaving only a sheer cliff with a howling wind in its wake. The faces tumble through, like dust in the wind, and the person turns to reveal a young woman with long dark hair and darker eyes. The young fox, Will knows instinctively, even if he cannot say.

“A girl was once named Chiyoh,” says the young fox. “And a girl learned many things. A girl learned that when the hounds bay for war, few things can stop them. A girl learned that shadows can bite and sunlight can choke. A girl learned that violence is what you understand.”

So saying, she grips Will, tight as a snake around his neck, and pushes him through the doorway, right to the edge, until he hovers just at the edge of falling off.

Will, naturally, grins at her and head butts her. When her grip slackens, he swipes her legs out from under her and kicks her hard in the chest. When she slams into the other door, the entire wall shakes, and Will hears, loud as day, a man shout, *Burn them all!*

“Ravenstag,” says the young fox.

“Chiyoh,” returns Will.

“I am Chiyoh no longer,” says the young fox. “And you are a ravenstag no longer.”

Will looks at the abyss. It is dark and cold and stretches so far down that he has no idea as to how far it goes, but he can see a glimpse of embers at the very, very, very bottom, like the faint light of fireflies in the distance, and Will presses one hand to his belly bearing his child and one hand to the neck bearing his alpha’s mark, and hears, again, a man shout, *Burn them all!*

He knows this man. He understands this man. He loves this man.

“To hell with you and your tricks,” Will snarls. “To hell with the past and the future. To hell with kings and faceless men. I am a ravenstag, and I say that death has no claim upon me.”

Will turns and jumps, and this time he does not scream.

Will awakens on a golden bed with four eyes staring at him and a cold wind biting at his skin and countless stars pin-wheeling overhead.

A girl was once named Chiyoh, whispers the flames that lick at Will. *For the love of a girl’s mother, a girl bids her father’s brother good-bye.*

Then, Will screams.

Chapter End Notes

Next up: A Dream of Teacups, wherein there are teacups.

A Dream of Teacups

Chapter Summary

There is a discussion about teacups.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

In King's Landing, during the last day of celebratory feasts for the wedding of King Cordell of Houses Dolarhyde and Verger to Lady Alana of House Bloom, the king raises a sparkling toast to his new queen and new dynasty. His sister Margot is the first to kneel and kiss his signet ring to renew her pledge of service to him and his new queen.

She will be the last to see his smug face.

King Cordell dies choking on poison, and all of the screams in the courtyard do not bring him back.

In Braavos, during the last hour of market, a girl with no name raises a silent toast to a boasting Lord with a cruel smile. When the room has cleared out, a girl with no name and the Lord of Shrike Isles drink deeply of the cask the Lord offered.

She will be the last to see his face.

Lord Garret Jacob Hobbs dies grasping at his throat, and all of his pleas do not bring him mercy from the girl's sharp, brand-new knife.

In the Great Grass Sea, during the last hour of sunset, Khal Hannibal raises a flaming toast to the pyre of his khaleesi and their unborn child. He ensures that the assassin Freddie is secured to the pyre with his own two hands, kneeling in supplication to the ones she sought so hard to kill.

She will be the last to see his beloved's face.

Freddie Lounds dies screaming in flames, and all of the struggles against the ropes do not bring her freedom.

And when the sun rises, four souls awaken with it.

Will does not remember the next seven days. Even if he tries the hardest he can, closing his eyes and focusing on the memory of the chaos that had been caused when he had screamed and fallen off the pyre, alive and unburnt with two screeching baby wolpertines clinging to his legs, all he can recall are flashes: flames, red-hot and kitten-soft; screams, grief and pain alike; and Hannibal, fierce and strong and alive and his.

Still, he does at least remember the day he finally wakes up.

When Will finally opens his eyes and the world is not blurry or immediately dark, he does the first thing that comes to mind and takes a deep breath. It's a habit he has been teasing Hannibal about as long as he has been able to speak Dothraki, but he acknowledges that it serves Hannibal well, and it serves Will well now. He smells sweat and oil and dust and something familiar and something fiery.

The something familiar, as it turns out, is the dead to the world alpha sprawled on a pile of blankets nearby.

The something fiery, as it turns out, is the two tiny wolpertingers who are nestled to Will's chest, sharp claws carefully tucked away, fur still downy soft, wings paper-thin and gorgeous.

It only takes Will calling Hannibal's name twice in a furious whisper before his alpha jolts awake and nearly concusses himself on the bench as he scrambles into a fighting stance, hair a long messy waterfall down his back. He is a beautiful sight, eyes wide and chest bare and mouth open in shock, and Will grabs at his shoulder the second he comes close enough so that he can kiss him and set his teeth to his alpha's shoulder.

Hannibal shudders like a newborn foal and takes a deep inhale of his own.

"My Will," Hannibal says in a tone of wonder, like he still thinks he is dreaming. "Are you truly awake?"

"I was about to ask you that," Will replies, running a finger down the soft fur of the closest wolpertinger. "These things would not be . . . out of place, in my dreams. Tell me again how you managed to end up with wolpertingers that are not stone and why they are cuddled up to me?"

Hannibal kisses him again, like he can't help it, and the words, when they come, are whispers against Will's ear, as if saying them any louder might cause the entire dream to end. "Your heart stopped," he says roughly. "Your heart stopped and no one could bring it back. I fed you potions, I rubbed herbs into your wound, I bathed you in every concoction that was ever made, and still your life slipped through my fingers."

"And you did not eat me?"

"Ah, dearest Will," Hannibal murmurs. "I must admit, I was . . . tempted. To carry a part of you with me forever."

“What changed your mind?” Will asks drowsily, barely stifling a yawn as he nestles even deeper into his alpha’s arms. He’s not particularly surprised Hannibal considered eating him, and he’s not offended either. He knows that Hannibal is well aware of every detail of Will’s plans for Hannibal’s pyre, one day when death takes him, and that those plans include both a feast and a fire.

Hannibal grimaces. “Your wolves. They howled night and day for you if anyone went within twenty paces of you. I could not possibly have my last meal in peace with that chorus in the background.”

It is, all things considered, a very weak excuse.

However, given that Will is alive and thankful to be in possession of all of his limbs, he chooses to ignore it in favor of more pressing concerns.

“If my heart stopped,” Will says, “and if you lit a pyre in my honor, then why am I alive?”

“I do not know,” Hannibal tells him soberly, and Will knows it is the truth without even needing to look at Hannibal’s face. Hannibal hates admitting that he does not know something. To hear it so freely and so solemnly is something Will had always dreamed of hearing; to hear it about the truth of his death is a little less gratifying.

Be careful what you wish for, Will’s father had always said.

Will turns his eyes to the little wolpertingers between them. “And the story for these two?”

They truly are beautiful. Like all of the sigils of the most ancient houses, they are animals of extraordinary beauty, with a front half of a dragon, complete with sharp teeth, jagged spikes, and wicked claws, and the back half of a wolf, complete with vivid fur, long tails, and powerful muscles. They are young, of course, so their wings are slight and thin, more akin to parchment than avenues to flight, and Will certainly hopes that they are too young to breathe fire. One is a deep black, like the color of the blood in the moonlight when Hannibal had flayed a man alive and served Will the finest meal he had ever eaten, and one is red, like the color of the heart Will had devoured as his child’s future was divined. Yet he can already imagine them in their prime, fierce and strong and enormous, turning the world upside down just because they can.

“Do you remember the two eggs we were gifted?” Hannibal asks.

“I don’t actually remember much of our wedding.”

“I did not expect you to.” Hannibal’s smirk fades quickly, softening into a genuine sort of fond amusement as he pets his own wolpertinger. “However, you were given two eggs, turned to stone without the warmth of their bearer and due to the long passage of time. When I made your pyre, I thought it only fitting that you might be joined in the Night Lands by our child and two companions to keep you safe.”

One wolpertinger snorts, rolling up to kick its legs sleepily in the air. The other shifts and Will has to move quickly to avoid squashing it.

Will gives his alpha a look. “Yes, fearsome protectors indeed.”

“In time, my Will, in time,” Hannibal chides. “Even you had to learn to properly wield your antlers, ravenstag mine.”

“I hope they learn quickly.”

Will still lets the two babies cuddle up to his chest for warmth though, because he is not heartless. And because it makes Hannibal look like he is about to melt at the sight of his omega, rounded with one child and curled protectively around two more. Or preen. Will supposes if anyone could manage to melt with love and preen with satisfaction at the same time, it would be Hannibal.

“Did you know you were an uncle?”

Hannibal’s face doesn’t twitch, which is annoying, but his scent certainly changes, so Will just smiles to himself and continues scrubbing because apparently no one thought to bathe him after he was taken away from the pyre covered in ashes and a week’s worth of rolling around in bed makes for a week’s worth of stink.

“As far as I am aware,” Hannibal says slowly, because he’s in the middle of fixing his saddle and Will loves springing complex things on him mid-operation to see how he has to switch his concentration, “neither my brother nor my sister had children.”

“Well, that is where you are wrong,” Will informs him cheerfully. He drapes himself against the edge and lets his arms rest on the top, mostly because it means water drips to the ground and Hannibal always twitches at that sight, without fail, partially because it’s Will, naked and smiling at him, and partially because it’s Will letting precious water fall to the ground. “I am fairly certain that your brother had a child with Lady Murasaki before his death. Her name was Chiyoh.”

“Was?”

“A girl was once named Chiyoh,” Will recalls. He doesn’t remember much of his trip down the hall of many faces and doors but he does remember that. “She said she was no one now.”

And Hannibal might be a Dothraki khal now more than he was ever a Lecter Prince, but the Faceless Men are known throughout Essos and Westeros both, so Will is completely expecting the way Hannibal’s face goes carefully blank as he absorbs this new information. Will supposes it is asking a lot of Hannibal, to shift his entire mindset from “I am the last Lecter” to “I have a niece who is most likely a murderous face-changing assassin”.

Hannibal, at least, does not insult him by asking if he is sure. Instead, he merely inquires, “And what else did you dream of in death, my Will?”

Will thinks of a dead king and a dead father. He thinks of Alana Bloom and Abigail Hobbs. He thinks of the past and the future. And he says, “I dreamed of my deepest fears and my dearest wishes.”

Hannibal smiles, like Will has told him nothing more exciting than the sky is blue. “It is said,” he murmurs pensively, “that death drives greatness.”

“No, Hannibal, that is what the Lecters said. I am a ravenstag. And we say – ”

“ – that there will be a reckoning, yes, I know,” Hannibal interrupts. He cocks his head, ever so slightly, and the way he looks at Will makes Will wonder if the water level in the tub might be rising not so much due to Will shifting about but perhaps Will’s nether regions adding to the water level without his permission as heat flushes his cheeks. “As I recall, you ravenstags had another saying: *This is my design*.”

And, well, Hannibal is not wrong. All Houses have their official words and the words that everyone uses to describe them behind their back. And the Grahams have been stuck with “This is my design” ever since the last King of the North had bent the knee to Aegon the Conqueror and had merely replied over and over “This is my design” when his many bannerman had asked him why. It doesn’t help matters that the House Graham also has a history of producing greenseers, who stared into the eyes of weirwoods and came back mumbling about futures and pasts and everything that ever could be.

“I am not a greenseer, Hannibal.”

Hannibal’s smile widens, and this time it’s enough that Will can see just the tiniest hint of his alpha fangs. “Ah, my dear, it was not I who dreamed up the idea of turning a man into a firefly.”

“Oh, I was just following some old sayings. Save yourself,” Will tells him flatly, because turnabout is fair play, “kill them all.”

Hannibal bites him for that, and this time the rush of wetness Will feels between his thighs in most certainly not just from the tub. In any case, he quickly forgets about it when Hannibal clambers elegantly into the tub and splashes water all over them both and the floor, causing the little wolpertingers to squeak out of fear and curiosity from their perch. Will pets them both, humming a soft song until they calm under his touch, and as Hannibal settles his hands onto Will’s skin, he rumbles, “Our children could not have asked for a more excellent bearer.”

“Don’t even think about it,” Will threatens. “You are going to do your fair share of raising these little terrors, alpha mine.”

Time passes, but slowly. Will’s belly grows larger and larger. The wolpertingers grow and eat and grow some more. And slowly but surely, news from the heart of King’s Landing finally reaches the Great Grass Sea.

Will wakes up to Hannibal solemnly dismissing Tobias and ducking back into the tent, his face unusually thoughtful. Not that Hannibal lacks an excellent meditative thinking face, but Hannibal is also excellent at quickly surveying a situation and selecting the most

advantageous course of action. His face is for show, and since Hannibal knows damn well he needn't make a show in front of a mate who can read this mind, it makes Will concerned.

Hannibal, of course, looks at Will's face and immediately says, "There is nothing wrong." Mostly because Will isn't the only one good at reading minds.

"Then why are you wearing that face?"

Hannibal cocks an eyebrow at him even as he sits and smoothes a careful hand over Will's belly. "Because it is my own?"

"I did not marry you for your sense of humor," Will informs him severely, although he can't help the way he relaxes when Hannibal starts putting pressure on his aching shoulders and back. It's becoming more and more difficult to get comfortable as their child grows ever larger, especially since Will refuses to be known as the outsider khaleesi who is too weak to ride and must be carried around in a caravan.

"King Cordell Dolarhyde is dead," Hannibal says.

"What, did someone start a war?"

"Apparently," Hannibal murmurs, "someone slipped poison in his chalice during his wedding. He choked to death."

Will thinks, vividly, of vines swallowing the king's head whole. He can't quite picture it as perfectly as it appeared to him when he was hovering at the edge of death, but he most certainly remembers the cup and the drink and the way the king struggled and wriggled and frothed at the mouth as the vines strangled the life from him.

And here I thought it was only a dream, he thinks.

He does not realize he has spoken aloud until Hannibal's hands slow and then stop altogether as his alpha leans closer, breathing hot hair against the nape of his neck like a warhorse pulled to a sudden stop.

"And what else do you dream of, my ravenstag?" Hannibal asks. "Pretty clothes and fine feasts and delicate teacups?"

Hannibal's tone is very strange. The words would suggest teasing, but Hannibal is stiff against Will's back in a way he's never been in Will's company. Even when he had been respecting Will's wish to not lie with him, he had always quickly cuddled up to Will in every way he possibly could. He even smells . . . well, Will would say apprehensive, but Hannibal is never apprehensive. Merely cautious.

So Will rolls over a little, just enough so that Hannibal is no longer awkwardly against his back but hovering over his front, fingers pressed to the swell of their child and with his eyes fixed upon Will's chest, and *looks*.

And he laughs.

Hannibal scowls, but at least he makes eye contact, so Will kisses him sweetly because even Hannibal can be won over with sweetness from time to time.

It also makes it easier to take Hannibal off guard, which is what Will does next when he sets his mouth to his mark on Hannibal's shoulder and bites, sinking his teeth in and holding tight until Hannibal's tension becomes a completely different kind, one that smells like lust and makes little shudders run down his alpha's spine. He even draws a little bit of blood, but a few quick swipes of his tongue solve that problem.

"Hannibal of House Lecter, my khal, my *alpha*," Will says, cupping his cheek to stop Hannibal's instinctive flinch, "I am yours and you are mine until the end of our days. I don't care if King Cordell is dead. I don't care if Wolf Trap is returned to me. Frankly, I don't care if my parents rise from their graves. I have you and I will never let you go, not ever."

Because in Hannibal's eyes, Will saw only *longing* and *fear* and the desperation of a man about to face the possibility of losing everything he loved, and Will knows in his heart that he will never set foot in Westeros again. After all, he does not want to go back.

His home is here. His alpha is here. His children – all of three of them – are here.

"If I dream of teacups, alpha mine," Will finishes, "I will dream of us drinking from them together."

"Maybe in another life," Hannibal says.

"Maybe. Or maybe you'll take my teacup and shatter it the way you shattered my life and maybe I'll love you for it all the same. Or maybe I'll hate you even more and rip out your throat with my teeth. Who knows. But this is our life now, Hannibal, and I intend to live it exactly like that."

"No teacups required."

"No delicate china required," Will agrees. "After all, your bloodriders would destroy china in a second. And if not them, the wolpertingers would."

When Will finally wakes up after the arduous hours of labor and giving birth to their child, he does so to Hannibal presenting him solemnly with his omega-gift, a token of appreciation from alphas to honor those who bring life.

And Hannibal, because he is Hannibal, gives Will a teacup.

Chapter End Notes

Aaaaand that's it! Thank you, everyone, for reading through. Comments and kudos are love, and please, again, give all the love to my lovely artist Foxwrapped's art which can

be found HERE.

End Notes

More works are coming out through the Murder Husbands Big Bang, so go and check those out too! They can be found through the Murder Husbands Big Bang blog or by clicking through to the AO3 collection.

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